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42 Indians among 49 killed in Kuwait apartment blaze

The building allegedly had 200 foreign workers living in it

DUBAI/KUWAIT CITY, 12 JUNE

Forty-two Indians were reportedly among 49 killed after a fire broke out in a building housing workers in Kuwait's Mangaf city.

The incident occurred at 9 am IST. Kuwaiti officials said over 40 people have been hospitalised.

Most deaths were due to smoke inhalation while residents were sleeping.

The fire started in a kitchen of the six-storey building that reportedly had 200 people living in it, who are workers of the same company.

Interior Ministry said that strict measures will be taken against building owners who violate the law.

The majority of the deceased were Indian nationals from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and north Indian states. Their ages ranged between 20 and 50 years, he was quoted as saying by English language daily Arab Times. The building is rented by the NBTC group.

The Indian Embassy in Kuwait has put in place an emergency helpline number (+965-65505246) to connect for updates.

An expatriate organisation president, who was at the site of the fire, said that at least 11 deceased were from Kerala.

Indians constitute 21 per cent (1 million) of the total population of Kuwait and 30 per cent of its workforce (approximately 9 lakhs).

Smoke billows after a fire broke out in a building, in Mangaf, Kuwait, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday wrote to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar seeking the Centre's intervention in the incident.

At the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh is rushing to Kuwait to oversee assistance to Indians injured in the fire and to ensure early repatriation of mortal remains of those killed. The Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber al-Sabah on Wednesday ordered authorities to probe the massive fire and vowed to hold accountable those responsible for the tragedy. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, serving as the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defence, has ordered police to arrest the owner of the Mangaf building where the fatal blaze occurred, the building's janitor, as well as the owner of the company responsible for the workers pending the end of the criminal evidence personnel's examination of the scene, the Kuwait Times reported.

He said that he gave orders to Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Manpower to launch immediate action to address similar violations where large numbers of workers are crammed into one residential building, and make sure that all safety requirements are in place in order to prevent similar incidents in the future. Engineer Saud Al-Dabbous, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, suspended several key officials, including the Deputy Director General for Hawalli and Al-Ahmadi Governorate Affairs, the Acting Director of the Al-Ahmadi Municipality Branch, the Director of the Audit, Follow-up, and Engineering Department, and the Head of the Violations Removal Department in Al-Ahmadi, Arab Times daily reported.

—Salar News with agencies

CM FOR THE 4TH TIME

Jana Sena Chief Pawan Kalyan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Chandrababu takes oath as Andhra CM; Pawan in Cabinet

AMARAVATI, 12 JUNE

TDP Supremo N Chandrababu Naidu was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for a fourth term on Wednesday at a ceremony that was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP leaders and Union Ministers.

Janasena chief and actor Pawan Kalyan and Naidu's son Nara Lokesh were among the 24 ministers in Naidu's cabinet who were administered the oath of office by Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Telugu cinema superstar Chiranjeevi referred to Pawan Kalyan, in separate social media posts, as "Deputy Chief Minister" of Andhra Pradesh. Modi hugged and patted Chandrababu after he took the oath The ceremony was also attended by Shah, Nitin Gadkari and JP Nadda.

After the swearing-in ceremony, Modi hugged Telugu megastar Chiranjeevi and Pawan Kalyan and fondly spoke to them while holding their hands. Naidu retained his Kuppam constituency while Pawan Kalyan and Lokesh won from the Pithapuram and Mangalagiri respectively in the recently held polls. The Pawan Kalyan-led party has got three berths and BJP one in the new state government. As per the strength of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly (175), the Cabinet can have 26 ministers, including the chief minister. Eight ministers belong to BC communities, one from the minority Muslim community, two from SC, and one from ST. Three ministers are women.

—PTI

>>>More on Page 3

Retail inflation slips to 1-year low of 4.75% in May: Govt

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Retail inflation continued its downward slide to reach a one-year low of 4.75 per cent in May due to a marginal decline of prices in the food basket and remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone of below 6 per cent, according to government data released on Wednesday. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation -- on a declining trend since January -- was 4.83 per cent in April 2024 and 4.31 per cent in May 2023 (the previous low). Inflation in the food basket was at 8.69 per cent in May, marginally down from 8.70 per cent in April, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). The headline inflation has seen sequential moderation since January 2024, albeit in a narrow range from 5.1 per cent in February to 4.8 per cent in April 2024. According to the data released by NSO, all India inflation based on CPI is the lowest in May 2024 since the year-ago month when it was 4.31 per cent. It is less than 6 per cent since September 2023. *—PTI*

IISc develops tech to remove arsenic from groundwater

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Researchers at the Centre for Sustainable Technologies (CST), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), have developed a novel remediation process for removing heavy metal contaminants such as arsenic from groundwater. The three-step method, which is patent-pending, also ensures that the removed heavy metals are disposed of in an environment-friendly and sustainable manner, instead of sending untreated heavy metal-rich sludge to landfills from where they can potentially re-enter groundwater, Bengaluru-based IISc said in a release. According to reports, the release said, 113 districts in 21 states in India have arsenic levels above 0.01 mg per litre while 223 districts in 23 states have fluoride levels above 1.5 mg per litre, which are beyond the permissible limits set by the Bureau of Indian Standards and World Health Organisation (WHO). These contaminants can significantly affect human and animal health, necessitating their efficient removal and safe disposal. First, contaminated water passes through a chitosan-based filter that traps arsenic. This filter can be reused after washing. Next, a membrane process separates the arsenic from the wash solution and concentrates it. Finally, microbes in cow dung convert the toxic arsenic into a less harmful organic form. *—PTI*

Terrorist, CRPF man killed in Kathua; 6 jawans injured in Doda

JAMMU, 12 JUNE

A terrorist holed up in a border village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district was killed by security forces on Wednesday in a more than 15-hour operation during which his partner was also shot dead and a CRPF jawan lost his life, officials said.

According to them, two senior officers escaped unhurt even as their vehicles were hit by bullets during the operation that began on Tuesday night after two terrorists were spotted in Saida Sukhal village.

A fresh encounter erupted between terrorists and security forces in Tanta area of Doda district on Wednesday. Five troopers of Rashtriya Rifles and a special police officer (SPO) were injured when terrorists attacked a joint checkpost in the upper reaches of Chattergalla on the Bhaderwah-Pathankot road late on Tuesday night.

The two incidents come just days after terrorists attacked a bus carrying pilgrims from the Shiv Khori temple to Katra, causing it to veer off the road and fall into a deep gorge, resulting in the death of nine people and injuries to 41 others.

Authorities have claimed that attempts by Pakistan to disturb the peaceful atmosphere in Jammu and Kashmir were the reason for the spurt in terror activities in the Jammu region. In Kathua's Saida Sukhal village near the International Border -- around 60 kms from here -- the second holed-up terrorist was killed on Wednesday noon in an intense gunfight after being cornered by the joint security parties of the police, Army and CRPF, officials said.

—PTI

At least 80 dead in Congo after boat capsizes

Kinshasa, 12 June

More than 80 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have died after the boat they were travelling on sank, President Felix Tshisekedi has announced. The accident on Wednesday occurred on the Kwa River, about 70km from the city of Mushie in Mai-Ndombe province. "The President of the Republic is calling for an investigation into the true causes of this unfortunate incident, to prevent such a disaster from happening again in the future," the presidency said in a statement posted on X. The incident was caused by night sailing, Rita Bola Dula, Mai-Ndombe province governor, told Reuters news agency. *—AP*

Prez nixes mercy plea of Red Fort attacker

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The mercy petition of Pakistani terrorist Mohammed Arif alias Ashfaq convicted in the nearly 24-year-old Red Fort attack case has been rejected by President Droupadi Murmu, officials said on Wednesday.

This is the second mercy plea rejected by the President after assuming office on 25 July, 2022.

The Supreme Court had dismissed a review petition by Arif on 3 November, 2022, affirming the death penalty awarded to him in the case.

However, a death row convict can still knock on the doors of the top court seeking commutation of his sentence on the ground of prolonged delay under Article 32 of the Constitution, feel experts.

The mercy petition from Arif, received on 15 May, was turned down on 27 May, the officials said, quoting the President's secretariat order of 29 May.

The Supreme Court, while upholding the death sentence, noted that there were no mitigating circumstances in Arif's favour and emphasised that the attack on the Red Fort posed a direct threat to country's unity, integrity, and sovereignty.

The attack, which took place on 22 December, 2000, saw intruders opening fire at the 7 Rajputana Rifles unit stationed within the Red Fort premises, resulting in the deaths of three Army personnel.

Arif, a Pakistani national and a member of banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was arrested by Delhi Police four days after the attack.

The trial court had said that the conspiracy to attack the Red Fort was hatched at the house of two conspirators in Srinagar, where Arif had illegally entered in 1999 along with three other LeT militants. *—PTI*

Pema Khandu **PHOTO: PTI**

PEMA KHANDU TO BECOME AP CM FOR THIRD TERM

ITANAGAR, 12 JUNE

Pema Khandu will become the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh for the third term in a row, after he was unanimously elected as BJP Legislature Party Leader at a meeting here on Wednesday, senior leader Tarun Chugh said.

Later in the evening, Khandu accompanied by Chugh and several legislators called Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Parnaik at Raj Bhawan here and staked claim to form the government.

Khandu along with his new council of ministers will take oath and secrecy of office at Dorjee Khandu Convention Hall here on Thursday, which is likely to be attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. *—PTI*

ICELAND ON TOP

India ranks 129th on Global Gender Gap index

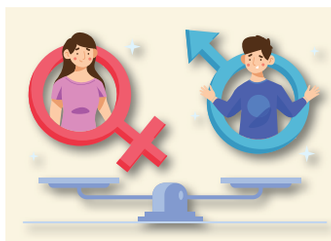
NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

India has slipped two places on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap index to 129th place, while Iceland retained its top position in the rankings published on Wednesday.

Within South Asia, India was ranked fifth after Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, while Pakistan was ranked last.

Globally, Sudan was ranked last on the index of 146 countries, while Pakistan slipped three places to 145th.

India figured among the economies with the lowest levels of economic parity, alongside Bangladesh, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, and Morocco. All of them registered less than 30 per cent gender parity in estimated earned income.



- India figured among the economies with the lowest levels of economic parity, alongside Bangladesh, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, and Morocco

However, India showed the best gender parity in terms of enrolment in secondary education, while it scored well on political empowerment of women at 65th rank globally.

With regard to parity in the number of years with female/male heads of state for the last 50 years, India was ranked 10th.

With a population of over 140 crore, India has closed 64.1 per cent of its gender gap in 2024 and the decline of two places from 127th last year, mainly happened due to small declines in 'Educational Attainment' and 'Political Empowerment,' parameters, while 'Economic Participation' and 'Opportunity' scores slightly improved.

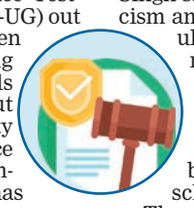
The WEF said India's economic parity score has trended upwards for the past four years.

In the Political Empowerment subindex, India scored within the top-10 on the head-of-state indicator, but its scores for women's representation at the federal level, in ministerial positions (6.9 per cent) and in Parliament (17.2 per cent), remain relatively low, it added. *—PTI*

NEET-UG sanctity not compromised, asserts NTA

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Sixty-three cases of students using unfair means were reported in National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) out of whom 23 have been debarred for varying periods, NTA officials said Wednesday, but reiterated the sanctity of the medical entrance exam hasn't been compromised and there has been no paper leak.



The result of the remaining 40 candidates who were found using unfair means have been withheld, NTA DG Subodh Kumar Singh told PTI. "On recommendations of the panel, 12 candidates were debarred from taking the exam for three years, nine candidates debarred for two years and two candidate for one year each," Singh said. NTA is under criticism amid allegations of irregularities and inflation of marks. The matter has also reached the top court which said on Tuesday the sanctity of NEET-UG, 2024 has been affected. It is scheduled to hear on Thursday three petitions, including the one filed by chief executive of EdTech firm 'Physics Wallah', pertaining to the controversy-ridden NEET-UG, 2024 for admission to MBBS and BDS. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Fake RMD gutka manufacturing ring busted, 7 held

BAGALKOT, 12 JUNE

Mudhol Police in Bagalkote district dismantled a large-scale fake RMD Gutka manufacturing network and seized goods worth Rs 30 lakhs. The police also arrested seven individuals allegedly involved in the illegal production and distribution of RMD Gutka The operation unfolded after a complaint filed by a citizen Mahantesh Moolimani, prompting police to launch an extensive investigation. Their efforts culminated in the arrest of. The arrested individuals are Muhammad' Wasim Munira, Himayat, Mahmud, Vikas Chavan, Santhosh Ballolle, Zaheera, and Iqwal. They hail from various locations across the country, including Delhi, Hyderabad, Belagavi, and Nippani, indicating a potentially nationwide network.

—Salar News

KIADB office taken over for unpaid compensation

DAVANGERE, 12 JUNE

The office of Karnataka Industrial Area Development Office (KIADB) in Davangere was taken over for not giving compensation totalling Rs 63 crore for land acquisition. The furniture of the KIADB office has been confiscated by the farmers of Ballari and court officers. Ballari, Haveri and Chitradurga districts come under the jurisdiction of the KIADB office at Davangere. After the confiscation order, the farmers loaded the office furniture, including chairs, tables and almirah, into the truck. In 2010, KIADB had given land to Brahmini Steels, Uttam Gallo, and NMDC companies owned by former minister and sitting Gangavati MLA Janardhana Reddy. Farmers of 10 villages had given land for this. *—Salar News*

Sick elephant calf reunited with mother

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 12 JUNE

Forest Department on Wednesday reunited a young elephant calf with its mother after providing treatment for illness in the Yelandur Wildlife Zone under the BRT tiger reserve. The two to three-year-old male calf was discovered alone and in poor health by forest staff patrolling the Ganjigatti forest area of Bethalkatte on Wednesday. The isolated calf was found on farm, prompting immediate action from the Bandipur Forest Officers. Forest officials promptly contacted a veterinarian to treat the sick calf. However, during the intervention, the mother elephant emerged and displayed aggressive behaviour towards the staff.

—Salar News

Man drowns in tank while trying to escape police

KOLAR, 12 JUNE

A man drowned while attempting to evade police arrest during a gambling raid in Konda Reddy cheruvu tank under Andhra Pardesh's Vayalpad police limits. The deceased was 45-year-old Narasimha, a resident of Tatalagadda village in Kolar. According to Kolar Superintendent of Police M Narayan, police received a tip-off regarding gambling activity occurring at the tank. A police team arrived at the location and found approximately twelve people engaged in card playing. Upon seeing the police officers, the gamblers scattered in an attempt to flee. Three individuals, including Narasimha, Shankara, and Shiva, jumped into the adjacent tank. While Shankara and Shiva managed to reach the opposite side, Narasimha, reportedly disappeared underwater.

—Salar News

Pavithra instigated Darshan, say police

Renukaswamy allegedly drew the wrath of Darshan for making lewd comments against her

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Shocking details have emerged from the probe into the murder of a man who allegedly made derogatory comments against the friend and co-star of leading Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa.

According to police sources, Renukaswamy, 33, drew the wrath of Darshan for making lewd comments against Pavithra Gowda on her social media posts. "It was Pavithra who instigated Darshan to punish Renukaswamy. Accordingly, the plan was hatched," they said.

Renukaswamy hailed from Lakshmi Venkateshwara Layout in Chitradurga and worked with a pharmacy company. "Darshan engaged the Chitradurga unit of Darshan Fan Club Convenor Raghavendra alias Raghu, who obtained all information about Renukaswamy."

Renukaswamy's wife Sahana said Raghavendra picked up her husband on Friday night from near their house. The victim was abducted and taken to a shed in Kamakshipalya area in Bengaluru, the sources said.

"Darshan beat up Renukaswamy with a belt.

Pavithra Gowda managed to act in a few movies that did not do well
PHOTO: INSTAGRAM @PAVITHRA GOWDA

After he fell unconscious, his accomplices thrashed him with sticks. Further, they threw him against a wall, which proved fatal," they said adding there were multiple bone fractures all over his body.

After he died, his body was dumped in a stormwater drain. A food delivery boy who noticed dogs eating a human body alerted the police. *—PTI*

Will take action after talks with artists' union: KFCC

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) President NM Suresh on Wednesday said a decision regarding taking action against Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who has been arrested in connection with a murder case, will be taken after discussion with the artists' union. Action will most likely be taken only after police file a chargesheet in the case. Suresh was responding to members of some pro-Kannada organisations, who met him, demanding that KFCC take strong action against Darshan. They demanded that Darshan's movies should not be released. "First of all I express my condolences to the family of Renukaswamy...we too share their grief. It is our duty to respond to the demand placed. Please don't say that the Film Chamber of Commerce is inactive, I don't agree with it," Suresh said. *—PTI*

Police given free hand to probe: HM

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said police have been given a free hand and action will be taken in accordance with law against Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and his associates who were arrested in connection with a murder case. Police will probe and decide whether Darshan is a "habitual offender", he said.

"Law is equal for everyone whether it is Darshan or Parameshwara. So, no one should take law into their hands," Parameshwara said here. To a question that Darshan had through influential politicians attempted to save himself, the minister said as far as he knows, no one has tried to influence. Asked as to how the government will stand by Renukaswamy's family, Parameshwara said he will speak to the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in this regard. In response to a question, he said every case need not be given to CBI for probe. 13 people have been arrested, and those involved in the case are known. "There is no need to give the case to another agency."

In 2011, he was arrested for allegedly assaulting his wife and threatening her. He was later released on bail and the couple subsequently resolved the issue and she withdrew the case against him. *—PTI*

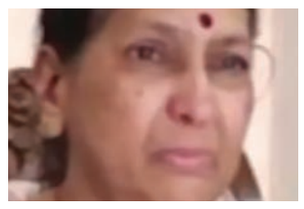
Ban Darshan from films: Parents of Renukaswamy

CHITRADURGA, 12 JUNE

Distraught parents of Chitradurga resident S Renukaswamy, the fan who was allegedly murdered by Kannada film star Darshan and his accomplices, on Wednesday appealed for a ban on the actor from the Kannada film industry.

Ratnaprabha, the mother of the deceased fan, said there should be a blanket ban on Darshan from acting or being part of any Kannada film, and the film industry should ensure his films are not released in Karnataka.

Renukaswamy's father Shivanagouda said Darshan could have informed them about the obscene message his son had sent to actor's friend Pavithra Gowda and they would have reprimanded him. "God should give Darshan enlightenment not to hurt anyone like my son in future. My son's wife is pregnant. I am retired and



Ratnaprabha PHOTO: SALAR

how is she supposed to lead her life?" he questioned.

'Beaten & tortured'

Meanwhile, City police continued to interrogate Darshan, Pavithra, and the 11 other accused for the second day on Wednesday. The accused were arrested on Tuesday and have been remanded in police custody for six days. Pavithra was kept at an observation centre overnight, while the other accused, including Darshan, spent the night in the cell of the Annapoorneshwari Nagar Police Station. *—Salar News*

CALL FOR JUSTICE

Members of civil society groups protest demanding justice to Renukaswamy, in Bengaluru on Wednesday PHOTO: SALAR

Victim's family, others stage protest

Bengaluru, 12 June

Family members and a group of organisations protested against the murder of Renukaswamy allegedly by Kannada actor Darshan and 12 others, in Chitradurga on Wednesday. They submitted a petition to Deputy Commissioner's Office, demanding stringent punishment to those responsible for Renukaswamy's death. Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, Dalit and Lingayat community organisations participated in the protest. Darshan arrested in connection with a murder case, was taken to Pattanagere here, where the crime was committed, for a spot inspection.

—Salar News/PTI

Convicted man beaten for raising pro-Pak slogans

BELAGAVI, 12 JUNE

Jailed gangster Jayesh Pujari alias Shakir Mohammad was beaten by advocates and mob for allegedly raising pro-Pakistan slogans on the premises of a court here. He was brought to the court on Wednesday for the hearing in a pending case against him, police said.

Gangster Jayesh Pujari alias Shakir Mohammad

Belagavi Deputy Commisioner of Police Rohan Jagdish said that he is serving a life term for threatening Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and Additional director General of Police Alok Kumar.

However, a police official said that they don't have a conclusive answer as to why he shouted those slogans. Police personnel present there immediately secured him and brought him to the police station. Pujari had a hearing scheduled in a 2018 case registered against him and so was brought to the court from Central Prison, Hindalga, where he is lodged, police said. The case was registered after he allegedly threatened Alok, the police official said. .

He is currently being held at Hindalaga Jail.

—Salar News with Agencies

BBMP removes 1,259 unauthorised flexes, banners

Bengaluru, 12 June

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has removed 1,259 unauthorised flexes, banners, LEDs, and hoardings on Thursday and filed 12 FIRs. This crackdown follows a directive issued on Wednesday by Deputy Chief Minister and Urban Development Minister DK Shivakumar for stricter enforcement against illegal advertisements. BBMP is enforcing "Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Corporation's Outdoor Billboard and Public Message Bye-laws-2018". Only shop front ads, vehicle self-advertisements, and limited-extent minor advertisements are allowed within City limits. Residents can submit a photograph or video to the BBMP helpline number 1533 or the advertisement department's WhatsApp number 9480683939. *—Salar News*

Notice sent to Yediyurappa in POCSO case

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has issued a notice to senior BJP leader and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa to appear before its probe team for an inquiry in connection with a POCSO case registered against him, police sources said on Wednesday.

Yediyurappa is presently in Delhi, and he is likely to join the probe after he returns, sources close to him said.

According to police, Yediyurappa has been booked under Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act and Section 354 A (Sexual harassment) of Indian Penal Code (IPC) based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he sexually assaulted her daughter during a meeting on February two this year.

On 14 March, hours after Sadashivanagar police registered the case, Karnataka Director General of Police

BS Yediyurappa PHOTO: PTI

Alok Mohan issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation with immediate effect.

The 54-year-old woman, who had levelled the charge against Yediyurappa, died at a private hospital here last month due to lung cancer.

The 81-year-old Yediyurappa has denied the charge and said he would fight the case legally.The CID has already recorded the statement of the victim and her mother under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, police added.

—PTI

Prajwal remanded to SIT custody till 18 June

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

A court on Wednesday remanded former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of rape and sexual abuse against several women, to the custody of Special Investigation Team (SIT) till 18 June.

The court had on 10 June sent him to 14 days of judicial custody, but the SIT today sought a body warrant against him in connection with a cybercrime case.

42nd Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court granted the SIT's request. With this, SIT secured the custody of Revanna till Tuesday.

The court, following Revanna's arrest on 31 May, remanded him to SIT custody till 6 June, and later extended it till 10 June. Prajwal Revanna has been booked in three cases of sexual assault. *—PTI*

Volunteers from various organisations during a protest over crimes against women, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday PHOTO: SALAR

Protest in Freedom Park over crimes against women

KASHMIRA DUTTA
BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Around 10 civil society groups and NGOs protested at Freedom Park here on Wednesday against the rise in crimes against women in the State.

The protesters submitted a memorandum to Nagalakshmi Chowdhary, Chairman, Karnataka State Commission for Women. The protesters demanded stringent action against the accused in Prabuddha murder case and other cases of violence against women. They called for amendments to the law at a time when juvenile crimes are on a surge.

The State reported a number of crimes against women over the last couple of weeks. A second-year BBA student Prabuddha was murdered in her home here by a 14-year-old boy in May 2024 for not giving Rs 2,000. Another act of violence was filed on 18 April, when Neha Hiremath, daughter of a Congress leader was murdered by Fayaz. Sexual harassment cases involving JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna were reported in this month.

Speaking to Salar News, Brinda Adige, founder-director Global Concerns India, said, "While we are working on action on gender-based violence, we also demand amendments to the present-day law."

> **It is not that we subscribe to punishment, we subscribe to the fear of law that has been missing in the criminals for the past few years**
>
> -Brinda Adige, Founder-director, Global Concerns India

She said, "It is not that we subscribe to punishment, we subscribe to the fear of law that has been missing in the criminals for the past few years". "Apart from appealing to the Government and the police to ensure proper action, the agenda is to educate people from childhood on subjects like gender sensitisation," said Sushma Varma, member, Mahila Munnade.

Zeena Mani, another member from Global Concerns India, said, "I need not tell my daughter to dress properly; rather, I educate my son to respect women so that we create a society safe for women to live."

"We, as a Society, are accountable for the severe crimes against women and educate the youth on gender sensitisation to prevent such crimes from happening," said Nagalakshmi Chowdhary, Chairman, State Women Commission. *—Salar News*

NEW APP TO FIGHT GOVT LAND ENCROACHMENT

BENGALURU, 12 JUNE

Karnataka Revenue Department has launched a new mobile application to tackle the persistent issue of government land encroachment. This app boasts a comprehensive digital database of over 1.4 million government land parcels across the state.

"This app offers a systematic and reliable solution to identify land encroachment," said Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda. The app provides detailed digital records, including survey numbers, land extents, and geo-boundaries, for every government landholding in every village. This transparency aims to deter potential encroachers.

The app leverages GPS technology to map each property. Officials have physically visited nearly 600,000 of these sites to verify their status. This initiative comes after a legislative bill proposing land record digitization was introduced in December 2023. The plan involves drone surveys and indexing of revenue records to further strengthen land protection measures.

This app replaces the older Bhoomi app, which digitised land records from manual formats in the early 2000s. The new app, along with ongoing field verification by village administrative officers, establishes a robust system for safeguarding government land.

Beyond preventing encroachment, the app offers additional functionalities. Users can identify buffer zones, areas with building restrictions, similar to those viewable on revenue maps within Google Maps. A timelapse feature allows users to observe historical land-use changes within a specified area. This can be helpful in understanding buffer zones and regulations for future constructions.

—Salar News

IN CHIKKABALLAPUR

50m crack in reservoir causes panic

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 12 JUNE

Jakkalamadagu village in Chikkaballapur district erupted in panic after a large fissure, measuring 50 metres, appeared on the surface of the Jakkalamadagu reservoir wall. The reservoir serves as a crucial source of drinking water for Doddaballapura and Chikkaballapur towns in the Bengaluru rural district.

With water levels currently at 16 metres, the significant crack has caused worry among city council officials, city water supply officials, and the public. A team of municipal officials, including senior engineers from the city water supply department and scientists from the National

The scientists ruled out stone mining activities within a 5 km radius as a contributing factor PHOTO: SALAR

Institute of Rock Mechanics, visited the site on 12 June to assess the situation. The scientists investigating the crack ruled out stone mining activities within a 5-kilometre radius as a contributing factor. They attributed the crack to poor soil quality, explaining that rainwater weakens the embankment, causing cracks to appear. However, they assured the public that the issue could be addressed with repairs.

Local residents have urged both the municipal councils and district administrations to take immediate action to protect the Jakkalamadagu reservoir. They emphasised the reservoir's critical role as a drinking water source for Doddaballapura and Chikkaballapur towns and believe the authorities hold the responsibility to safeguard this vital resource.

—Salar News

669 candidates file nominations for civic polls in Nagaland

KOHIMA, 12 JUNE

A total of 669 candidates filed their nominations for the elections to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Nagaland that will be held on 26 June. According to the State Election Commission, 669 candidates, including 238 women, filed their nomination papers for the three municipal councils and 36 town councils. Tuesday was the last day for filing of nominations while scrutiny of documents would be taken up on Thursday with June 18 being the last date for withdrawal of candidature. It is after 20 years that the elections to ULBs are going to take place in the state. It is also historic as this would be the first-ever municipal elections in the state to be held with 33 per cent reservation for women. *—PTI*

Modi to leave for G7 summit in Italy today

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Italy on Thursday to attend the annual summit of G7 advanced economies. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said on Wednesday that Modi's participation in the G7 summit would provide an opportunity to follow up on outcvomes of the G20 summit held under India's presidency last year. The G7 summit, to be held in the luxury resort of Borgo Egnazia in Italy's Apulia region from 13 June 13 to 15, is likely to be dominated by the raging war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. US President Joe Biden, French Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are among the top leaders attending the summit.*—PTI*

Jarange given IV fluids as fast enters the 5th day

JALNA, 12 JUNE

Activist Manoj Jarange, whose indefinite fast over Maratha reservation entered the fifth day on Wednesday, started taking intravenous fluids after a Maharashtra minister assured to resolve the issue. Jarange, who launched his fresh round of protest on Saturday at his native Antarwali Sarati village in Maharashtra's Jalna district, however warned that if the government fails to resolve the issue immediately, he would stop taking intravenous fluids again. In view of the activist's deteriorating health condition, newly-elected Shiv Sena MP from Aurangabad (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar) Sandipan Bhumre visited Antarwali Sarati and met Jarange on Tuesday. Jarange has been demanding implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of Maratha community members and also seeking a law to identify Kunbis as Marathas. *—PTI*

Abhishek Banerjee to take 'short hiatus' from TMC

KOLKATA, 12 JUNE

TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday said he will be taking a "short hiatus" from the organisation for some pressing medical reasons. Banerjee, the nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and considered number two in the party hierarchy, also said that he would understand the needs of the people during this period. "In light of some pressing medical reasons, I will be taking a short hiatus from the organisation. This time off will be an opportunity for me to humbly explore and understand the needs of our people and community. I trust that the government of West Bengal will act swiftly and leave no stone unturned to ensure justice for those in need," he said on X. The Diamond Harbour MP said that he had travelled across West Bengal last year around this time taking part in the party's Naba Jowar mass outreach programme to understand the challenges faced by people.*—PTI*

Security personnel during search and cordon operation after a terrorist attack, at Bhadarwah, in Doda ***PHOTO: PTI***

Why mum on J&K attacks: Cong to PM

Cong questions Modi's stand on Andhra status

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Congress on Wednesday said BJP's chest-thumping and "hollow" claims of return of peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir have been thoroughly exposed by the three terror attacks in the region in the past three days. Congress leader and in-charge of media and publicity department Pawan Khera also questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the matter, claiming he has time to respond to Pakistani leaders, but no time to condemn the brutal terror attacks. His remarks come amid a rise in terror incidents in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

Khera claimed that in the past 10 years, "loud chest-thumping" by the Modi government has made national security a "casualty." While innocents suffer the consequences of cowardly terror attacks, business as usual continues, he said.

"Even as Narendra Modi and his NDA government was swearing in, and heads of states were visiting the country, India suffered a horrific and gruesome terror attack in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, where 9 precious lives were lost and at least 33 people were injured, when terrorist fired upon a bus filled with pilgrims," he said.

"Not even innocent children were spared. Did the victims not deserve a word of sympathy from the self-proclaimed 'divine' Prime Minister," he asked. Following that, he said, another terror attack took place in Kathua, where one civilian was injured. On 11 June, he said, six security personnel and a civilian were injured in an encounter with terrorists at Chhatrakala, Doda, Jammu. According to officials, terrorists opened fire on a joint checkpoint manned by the 4 Rashtriya Rifles and police in Chattergalla area along Bhadarwah-Pathankot. Meanwhile, Congress asked Modi to give clarity on whether he would deliver the special category status for Andhra Pradesh.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh shared on X his speech in the Rajya Sabha from seven years ago about the Modi government's "failure" to deliver on the promise of the AP Reorganisation Act of 2014. *—PTI*

TRIBAL OUTREACH

Mohan Majhi takes oath as BJP's first Odisha CM

BHUBANESWAR, 12 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi during swearing-in ceremony in Odisha on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Four-time MLA and tribal leader from Keonjhar district Mohan Charan Majhi was on Wednesday sworn in as the first BJP Chief Minister of Odisha at a ceremony here attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union ministers and chief ministers

Four-time MLA and tribal leader from Keonjhar district Mohan Charan Majhi was on Wednesday sworn in as the first BJP Chief Minister of Odisha at a ceremony here attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union ministers and chief ministers and other members of his council of ministers at Janata Maidan here.

This is the first time that a BJP government has been formed in the eastern state after defeating the 24-year-old Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government headed by Naveen Patnaik.

Apart from Modi, BJP Chief JP Nadda, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Bhupender Yadav, Dharmendra Pradhan, Jual Oram, Ashwini Vaishnaw and others attended the ceremony. Several Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states including Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Uttarakhand were also present. Odisha's former chief minister and BJD President Naveen Patnaik also attended the ceremony.

The 16-member council of ministers led by Chief Minister Majhi includes a diverse group with four tribals, including Majhi himself, two Dalits, and one woman.

Suresh Pujari, Rabinarayan Naik, Nityananda Gond, Krushna Chandra Patra, Prithiviraj Harichandan, Mukesh Mahaling, Bibhuti Bhusan Jena and Krushna Chandra Mohapatra took oath as Cabinet ministers.

Among 78 BJP members elected to the Assembly, only five are women. Sources indicated that Surama Padhy, who was elected from Ranpur in Nayagarh district, is expected to become the Speaker.

The ministers hail from various regions across the state - four are from the western region, three, including the chief minister, are from the northern region, four from the coastal belt, three from the southern region, and one from central Odisha. *—PTI*

1st session of 18th LS from 24 June; Budget likely in July

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will begin on 24 June during which new members of the Lower House will take oath and the Speaker will be elected, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Wednesday.

President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on 27 June and is likely to outline the new government's roadmap for the next five years. The session will conclude on 3 July. The first three days of the first session will see the newly elected leaders taking oath and electing the Speaker of the House. Both Houses of Parliament are expected to reconvene in the third week of July for the presentation of the Union Budget. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to become the first finance minister to present seven consecutive Union Budgets, surpassing the record of Morarji Desai, who had presented six budgets in a row.

"First session of 18th Lok Sabha is being summoned from 24/6/24 to 3/7/24 for oath/affirmation of newly elected members, election of Speaker, President's address and discussion thereon," Rijiju said on X.

He said the 264th Session of Rajya Sabha will also commence on 27 June and conclude on 3 July. Prime Minister Modi is expected to introduce his council of ministers to Parliament after the President's address on 27 June. The debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address is expected to see an aggressive Opposition, whose strength has increased in the 543-member House, trying to corner NDA government on various issues. *—PTI*

A TOUGH CALL

Rahul in dilemma on whether to retain Wayanad or Raebareli

MALAPPURAM/ WAYANAD, 12 JUNE

Rahul Gandhi at a public meeting in Malappuram ***PHOTO: PTI***

Rahul Gandhi, who won from Wayanad and Rae Bareli in the 2024 general elections, kept people guessing on Wednesday about which seat he will retain, even as KPCC Chief K Sudhakaran hinted that the Congress leader would relinquish the constituency in Kerala. According to the Representation of People Act, a candidate can contest from two Lok Sabha constituencies, but can hold only one seat at a time. Therefore, Congress leader has to give up one of the two seats he has won.

Addressing a public meeting at Edavanna in Malappuram earlier in the day, Gandhi said he was in a dilemma as to which constituency he should relinquish.

He said that whatever decision he takes, both constituencies will be happy with it.

Meanwhile, at a public meeting at Kalpetta in Wayanad district of the state where Gandhi was present, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sudhakaran hinted that the Congress leader might relinquish the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat.

"I have a dilemma before me, whether I should be the MP of Wayanad or of Rae Bareli. What I will commit to you is that both Wayand and Rae Bareli will be happy with my decision," Rahul said.

He reiterated it while speaking at Kalpetta. In 2019, Gandhi had contested from Amethi and Wayanad, but lost the north Indian constituency to BJP's Smriti Irani, and won from Wayanad by a huge margin. The public meeting at Edavanna was his first appearance in the state after winning the Wayanad LS seat for the second consecutive time.

In a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi, while speaking of his dilemma over choosing between his two LS seats, said that unlike the PM he does not receive any directions from god on what has to be done. *—PTI*

Punjab CM meets Kejri in Tihar jail, discusses poll result

CHANDIGARH, 12 JUNE

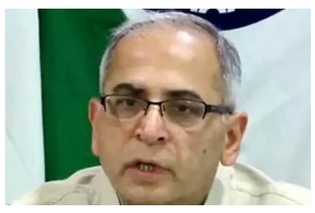
Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday met AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal in the Tihar jail in Delhi and discussed the party's performance in the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, party sources said.

It was the first meeting between Mann and the Delhi chief minister after the Lok Sabha poll results which came out on 4 June. Kejriwal is lodged in the Tihar jail in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

In 2024 polls, Congress dealt a blow to the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP and SAD, winning seven of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab even as two Independents registered a surprise victory. AAP could manage to win three seats of Hoshiarpur, Anandpur Sahib and Sangrur as against the target of winning all 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in the just-concluded general elections. *—PTI*

India to engage in Swiss peace summit on Ukraine: Kwatra

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE



Vinay Kwatra ***PHOTO: ANI***

- India on Wednesday said it will participate in the upcoming peace summit on the Ukraine conflict in Switzerland at an appropriate level

India on Wednesday said it will participate in the upcoming peace summit on the Ukraine conflict in Switzerland at an appropriate level. The Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra announced it.

The summit will take place at Bürgenstock in Lucerne on 15 and 16 June. Switzerland has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend it. However, it is almost certain that Modi will not participate in it with sources indicating that a senior diplomat may represent India at the summit.

That consideration is currently going on in the system and as and when we have a decision on the representative from India who'll be participating, we'll be very happy to share it with you, he said.

The foreign secretary made the comments at a media briefing he addressed on Modi's visit to Italy to attend the G7 summit. Last month, Swiss State Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alexandre Fasel visited India to invite it for the summit.

India is a friend of the world and the global community expects it to contribute significantly in bringing peace to war-torn Ukraine, Fasel told PTI.

Fasel held wide-ranging talks with his Indian interlocutors and extended an invitation to the Indian prime minister for his participation at the summit that is aimed at charting a course for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Switzerland has extended invitations to over 160 countries for the summit. "India is a friend of the world. There is really an expectation from the international community that India can contribute to this (peace) process," the top Swiss official said. *—PTI*

Tipra Motha minister unhappy with portfolios

AGARTALA, 12 JUNE

Tipra Motha leader Animesh Debbarma, who became a Minister in the BJP-led government in Tripura ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, said he was unhappy with the portfolios allotted to him and was looking to take up the issue with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

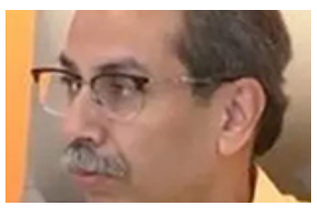
Speaking to reporters, Animesh said he has already raised the issue with Chief Minister Manik Saha.

"I have been in politics for the last 22 years. Many MLAs get many things even after completing only five years in politics," he said.

"If one looks at my experience, I was elected MLA many years ago and then worked in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) as an executive member, and also performed my duties as leader of the opposition in the assembly. I urge the CM to provide important departments to me and I will work efficiently," he said. *—PTI*

'Will Modi visit Manipur after Bhagwat's remarks?'

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE



Uddhav Thackeray ***PHOTO: PTI***

Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Manipur after RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's remarks on the situation in the north-eastern state. Addressing a press conference here, the former Maharashtra chief minister also sought to know what was the difference on the ground after the abrogation of Article 370, which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

"Lives are being lost. Who is responsible for the terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir?" he asked.

Bhagwat on Monday expressed concern over peace eluding Manipur even after one year and said the situation in the strife-torn north eastern state must be considered with priority. "I am concerned about future of the country and not about future of the NDA govt," the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader said.

He also said there were no differences in Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, comprising Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (SP) led by Sharad Pawar, over candidates for the upcoming state legislative council polls to four constituencies. "There is no difference," Thackeray asserted. It is a fact there was a "loose connection" in the dialogue (among the MVA partners), Thackeray said, adding that he was not here after polls. *—PTI*

CM ONCE AGAIN

Naidu bounces back after all-time low

AMARAVATI, 12 JUNE

TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu takes oath as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister in Amaravati on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Three years ago, storming out of the state Assembly in anger, Chandrababu Naidu vowed to return only as Chief Minister. True to his word, he has now ascended to the position.

Andhra Pradesh Governor Abdul Nazeer on Wednesday administered the oath of office to the 74-year-old Naidu, marking his fourth term as Chief Minister, after Telugu Desam Party-led (TDP) NDA swept the Assembly polls, bagging 164 out of the total 175 Assembly seats. TDP alone secured 135 seats while its partners Janasena and BJP won 21 and eight seats respectively, relegating the former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSR Congress to just 11 seats.

After facing a humiliating defeat in the 2019 Assembly elections, Naidu tirelessly worked to maintain relevance in both state and central politics, without giving up.

TDP also put up a good show in Lok Sabha polls, winning 16 of the total 25 seats in the state, with allies BJP and Janasena Party securing three and two constituencies respectively.

Naidu has thus emerged as one of the kingmakers, with TDP being the second largest party in the rul-ing NDA alliance behind BJP in the 543-member Lok Sabha.

This is the latest turn of fortune for him who is credited with transforming Hyderabad, the capital of undivided Andhra Pradesh, into a technology and computer software hub. Naidu first became the Chief Minister in 1995 and went on to have two terms. His first two terms as Chief Minister were at the helm of united Andhra Pradesh, beginning in 1995 and ending in 2004, nine years at a stretch, while the third term came post bifurcation of the state.

He has now had the last laugh over his opponents and critics, with the spectacular performance of TDP both in the Assembly as well as Lok Sabha elections. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

C'garh mental health institute gets hoax bomb threat

CHANDIGARH, 12 JUNE

S A mental health institute here received a bomb threat over email on Wednesday, but later it turned out to be a hoax, police said. After the email was received in the morning, patients and employees were moved to safety and a search operation was initiated, police said. An official of the institute claimed the same email was sent to a number of hospitals in Delhi and South India. A Chandigarh police official said they cordoned off the area and thoroughly searched the premises of the mental health institute but nothing was found. There were about 100 people, including patients, doctors and other employees at the hospital at that time, she said.—*PTI*

Thane man kills son by stuffing paper ball into mouth

THANE, 12 JUNE

A 59-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing his nine-year-old son by stuffing a paper ball into his mouth in Thane district, police said on Wednesday. The accused was inebriated at the time of the incident which took place at Washala in Kasara area under Sahapur taluka on the intervening night of Monday-Tuesday, they said, adding the exact reason behind the crime was not yet known. The man and his wife had been living separately following domestic quarrels and the boy was staying with his mother, an official from the police control room said. The boy went missing from his mother's house on Monday and the family members launched a search for him. The minor was found dead near his father's house at around 8 am on Tuesday, the official said. An investigation suggested the man resorted to excessive alcohol consumption after his wife started living separately, the official said. —*PTI*

Woman gets lifer for stabbing husband's mom 95 times

REWA, 12 JUNE

A court in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa has sentenced a 24-year-old woman to death for murdering her mother-in-law in 2022 by stabbing her more than 95 times. Rewa district's fourth additional sessions judge Padma Jatav convicted Kanchan Kol for killing her 50-year-old mother-in-law Saroj Kol. Kanchan was a resident of Atraila village under Mangawa police station limits. The victim was alone in the house at that time. Her son later informed the police and took her to a hospital, where doctors declared her dead, Dwivedi said. The public prosecutor said that victim Saroj Kol's husband Valmik Kol was also named as a co-accused in the case on the charge of inciting her, but was acquitted in the absence of evidence.—*PTI*

3 dead after bike collides with Army truck in R'than

JAIPUR, 12 JUNE

Three men were killed and another injured in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar district after their bike collided with an army truck, police said Wednesday. The incident happened in Suratgarh town of the district late Tuesday night when four persons riding on a bike were returning to their village from a brick kiln, they said. The bike collided with the truck due to which all four sustained grievous injuries, Assistant Sub-Inspector Vinod Bishnoi said. He said that the army took all four of them to the army hospital where two of them were declared brought dead whereas another died while undergoing treatment. One injured has been referred to Sriganganagar for treatment.—*PTI*

SC raps Delhi over inaction against 'tanker mafia'

SC also slammed AAP govt over water wastage amid crisis

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

People in Delhi are suffering due to water scarcity, Supreme Court observed on Wednesday. It slammed AAP government over water wastage and tanker mafia and sought to know what steps it has taken to ease the recurring problem.

A vacation bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Prasanna B Varale told the Delhi government it will ask the city police to take action against the tanker mafia if it can't deal with them. If the same water can be transported using tankers, why can't it be supplied through the pipeline, a disquieted court said.

The apex court said if there can be stringent laws to control theft of electricity, why can't there be laws to check water wastage.

"If water is coming from Himachal Pradesh, where is it going in Delhi? There is so much pilferage, transportation loss, and tanker mafia working. Have you taken any action against these? If you are not taking any action, then we will hand it over to Delhi police. People are suffering. The same water is coming through tankers but there is no water in the pipeline. We can see from the affidavit that these matters have been coming in 2018, 2019, and 2021. Every time this court says we can't do it, let it be done by the Yamuna Water Board (Upper Yamuna River Board-UYRB). What measures have you taken to control water waste coming through the two barrages if this is a recurring problem? Please show us what action or FIR have you lodged against tanker mafias," the bench observed.

The apex court said if there can be stringent laws to control theft of electricity, why can't there be laws to check water wastage PHOTO: PTI

Advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for the Delhi, sought to assuage the court's concern, saying action has been taken to prevent water wastage, including disconnection of supply to places where there is no pressing need for it.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Delhi government, cited an order passed by the UYRB in 2018 under which Delhi must get 1013 cusecs of water.

"However, as against this 1013 cusecs, the actual water received is varying between 800-900 cusecs," Singhvi said.

The UYRB had told the court in an affidavit that Himachal Pradesh has to prove it has been releasing the promised 137 cusecs of surplus water for Delhi.

The top court asked the Delhi government to file an affidavit mentioning the steps it has taken to stop unnecessary loss of water.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by the Delhi government seeking a direction to Haryana to release the surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the national capital to mitigate its water woes.

The acute shortage of drinking water has become an "existential problem" in Delhi, the top court had earlier observed and directed the Himachal Pradesh government to release 137 cusecs of surplus water to the national capital on Friday and Haryana to facilitate its flow.

—*PTI*

'EVIDENCE AGAINST THEM'

No bail for PFI workers over Islamic nation conspiracy

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Bombay High Court has refused to grant bail to three alleged members of the banned Popular Front of India, noting they "conspired to transform India into an Islamic country by 2047" and overawe the government by use of criminal force.

A division bench of Justices Ajey Gadkari and Shyam Chandak on Tuesday rejected the bail pleas of Razi Ahmed Khan, Unais Umar Khaiyyam Patel and Kayyum Abdul Shaikh, and observed there was prima facie evidence against them.

They are accused of being members of the Popular Front of India (PFI), banned by the Centre in 2022, and indulging in conspiracy acts against the Government of India.

The court, in its order, said the accused people conspired to overawe the government by use of criminal force.

The accused also incited like-minded people to join them to overawe the government by use of criminal force, it observed.

The bench said the accused people participated in spreading hatred against the state and pushing anti-national agenda through various means of propaganda.

PHOTO: PTI

The accused people shared a document on social media groups titled 'Vision - 2047', it noted.

"Perusal of Vision-2047 document indicates that it is a sinister plot and design to transform India into an Islamic State by adopting all possible methods mentioned therein," the court.

Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) had lodged a case against the suspected PFI members under the Indian Penal Code sections for criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity between religious groups and provisions of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. —*PTI*

TO CURB CHILD MARRIAGE

Assam starts monthly stipend for girls in higher education

GUWAHATI, 12 JUNE

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday announced that his government would provide monthly stipends to all girl students from class 11 to post-graduation over the next five years, aiming to prevent child marriages.

Addressing a press conference, Sarma said the scheme, 'Nijut Moina', was approved by the cabinet, which estimated that Rs 1,500 crore would be required in five years to give the incentives to around 10 lakh girls.

"A married girl will not get the benefit. The only exception will be those married girls who are enrolled in PG courses, they will also benefit," he said.

The sole aim of this scheme is to delay the marriage of a girl so that she can be financially independent and start earning for herself and her family, Sarma said.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the scheme PHOTO: PTI

"The scheme will increase the gross enrollment ratio of girls substantially," he asserted.

All girls studying in classes 11 and 12 will get Rs 1,000 every month, it will be Rs 1,250 for degree students and Rs 2,500 for girls doing post-graduation, Sarma said.

"Except for daughters of ministers, MLAs and MPs, and those students studying in private colleges, all girls irrespective of their financial background will be included in the scheme. In June and July, during summer vacation, no money will be given. The stipend will be deposited to the bank accounts of the students for 10 months in a year," he said. —*PTI*

This, however, is not the first time that Indian nationals have lost their lives in the Russia-Ukraine conflict PHOTO: PTI

2 Indians recruited by Russian Army killed in war

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Two Indian nationals who had been recruited by the Russian Army have recently been killed in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

The Indian Embassy in Moscow is pressing for the mortal remains of the deceased Indians to be repatriated to the country as soon as possible.

As per the release, MEA has taken up the matter of early release and return of all Indian nationals who are with the Russian Army. The MEA, in its release, has clearly urged Indian nationals to exercise caution while seeking employment opportunities in Russia.

"India has also demanded that there be a verified stop to any further recruitment of our nationals by the Russian Army. Such activities would not be in consonance with our partnership," it said. Recently, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), busted a major human trafficking network running across the country targeting Indian nationals on the promise of offering lucrative jobs abroad but allegedly sending them to the war zone. —*ANI*

5,000 Kashmiri Pandits leave for mela in Kashmir

NAGROTA, 12 JUNE

More than 5,000 people, mostly members of the Kashmiri Pandits, started their journey from here on Wednesday for the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela in the Kashmir Valley amid tight security, officials said.

The Kheer Bhawani Mela, celebrated on Zeisht Ashtami, will take place on 14 June at the shrines of Tulmulla in Ganderbal, Tikker in Kupwara, Laktipora Aishmuqam in Anantnag, Mata Tripursundri Devsar in Kulgam, and Mata Kheer Bhawani in Manzgam.

The four-day pilgrimage started on Wednesday.

The devotees left in 176 buses for the five renowned shrines in the Kashmir Valley.

About the recent terror attacks in Jammu, a devotee said, "We do not fear these terrorist attacks. How long will we remain in fear? We have Mata's (deity's) protection." —*PTI*

After violence, Ch'garh transfers collector and SP

RAIPUR, 12 JUNE

Chhattisgarh government has transferred the collector and superintendent of police of Balodabazar-Bhatapara following large-scale arson at the district headquarters two days back.

The transfer orders were issued by the state's general administration and home departments on Tuesday night.

Balodabazar-Bhatapara Collector KL Chauhan has been shifted to Mantralaya (secretariat) as special secretary (without any portfolio), as per the General Administration Department's order.

Cooperative Societies registrar Deepak Soni, who was also having additional charge of commissioner MNREGA, will replace Chauhan as the new Balodabazar-Bhatapara collector. Balodabazar-Bhatapara SP Sadanand Kumar, a 2010-batch IPS officer, has been transferred to the police headquarters as Deputy Inspector General of Police, as per the state home department's order.

Surguja SP Vijay Agrawal has been appointed in place of Kumar in Balodabazar-Bhatapara. Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) 4th battalion Commandant Yogesh Patel, a 2018 batch IPS officer, will replace Agrawal in Surguja. On Monday, a mob set fire to a government office and more than 150 vehicles, including two-wheelers and four-wheelers, in Balodabazar during a protest called by Satnamis against the alleged vandalisation of a religious structure last month. —*PTI*

Video shows rats roaming in MP govt hospital

GWALIOR, 12 JUNE

A video has surfaced on social media showing rats roaming purportedly in a ward of a government-run hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior city, prompting the authorities to order an effective pest control at the medical facility.

The Opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday shared the video on its X handle, claiming there were "more rats than patients" at the Kamla Raja Hospital in Gwalior, and criticised the government over the condition of health facilities in the state. Some social media users have shared the video showing rats roaming around. —*PTI*

8 dead as truck overturns in UP

HARDOI, 12 JUNE

A sand-laden truck overturned on people sleeping outside their house here early Wednesday, leaving eight members of a family dead, police said.

Superintendent of Police Keshav Chadra Goswami said the victims were buried alive under the sand.

Locals tried to remove the sand to rescue the family but in vain. A bulldozer was subsequently called to remove the sand and the bodies recovered.

The deceased are Awdhesh, 40; his wife Sudha, 35; and their three children Lalla, 5; Sunaina, 11; and Buddu, 4; besides their relative Karan, 35; his wife Hero, 30; and their daughter Komal, 5.

"Another five-year-old girl was injured in the incident and has been admitted to a hospital," the officer said, adding the truck driver has been arrested.

Rescue and relief work underway after a truck loaded with sand overturned on a family in Hardoi on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath condoled the loss of lives in the incident.

District Magistrate Mangla Prasad Singh said police have seized the truck and a probe is being conducted. —*PTI*

BETWEEN 1980 AND 2020

Nitrous oxide emission up by 40%, India 2nd largest emitter

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Planet-warming nitrous oxide (N2O) emissions grew by 40 per cent between 1980 and 2020, with China being the largest emitter, followed by India and the US, according to a new report.

The top 10 emitters are China, India, the US, Brazil, Russia, Pakistan, Australia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Canada, it said.

The study by the Global Carbon Project, a network of climate scientists, also said that 74 per cent of the nitrous oxide emissions in the past decade came from the use of nitrogen fertilisers and animal manure in agriculture.

Nitrous oxide is the third most significant greenhouse gas after carbon dioxide and methane and is 273 times more potent than CO2 over 100 years.

The increase in greenhouse gases has already raised the Earth's average surface temperature by 1.15 degrees Celsius compared to the 1850-1900 average. Anthropogenic nitrous oxide emissions contribute to about 0.1 degrees of this warming.

In 2022, the concentration of nitrous oxide in the atmosphere reached 336 parts per billion, 25 per cent higher than in 1850-1900, significantly surpassing the predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Nitrous oxide is the third most significant greenhouse gas PHOTO: PTI

Agricultural emissions were 8 million metric tonnes in 2020, a 67 per cent increase from the 4.8 million metric tonnes in 1980, according to a study published in the journal Earth System Science Data.

- Planet-warming nitrous oxide (N2O) emissions grew by 40 per cent between 1980 and 2020, with China being the largest emitter, followed by India and the US, according to a new report. The top 10 emitters are China, India, the US, Brazil, Russia, Pakistan, Australia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Canada, it said.

Scientists suggest that to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius, as set by the Paris Agreement, nitrous oxide emissions from human activities must decrease by at least 20 per cent from 2019 levels by 2050.

In 1980, farmers used 60 million metric tonnes of commercial nitrogen fertilizers. By 2020, the usage had increased to 107 million metric tonnes. Animal manure contributed 101 million metric tonnes in 2020, making the total usage 208 million metric tonnes.

The scientists also pointed out that the continuous rise in a greenhouse gas with a global warming potential about 300 times greater than carbon dioxide poses serious threats to the planet.

—*PTI*

MOURNERS AWAIT

Mourners await the body of Vice President Saulos Chilima, at Kamuzu International Airport in Lilongwe, Malawi, Tuesday, June 11, 2024. The wreckage of the military plane carrying Vice President Chilima and nine others was located in a mountainous area in the north of the country after a search that lasted more than a day
PHOTO: AP/PTI

Peace eludes Manipur even after defeating BJP

Thangman Guite had just finished her dinner on the night of June 6 when she received a phone call.

"They are coming, hide," is all the 26-year-old school teacher heard. Several other residents of Vengnuam, a village in Manipur's Jiribam district bordering Assam, received a similar phone call.

Within minutes, Guite switched off the lights of her house and instructed about 15 villagers assembled before her home to run towards the house closest to the nearby forest. She also asked everyone to switch off their phones.

As they huddled in one of the rooms in that house, not even daring to approach the window to have a look outside, they heard voices and gunshots as at least two vehicles, allegedly carrying armed men belonging to Arambai Tenggol, a local militia, began to enter the village.

The huddled villagers ran to the forest, as quietly as they could. While hiding in darkness and fearing being discovered, Guite said she began to have flashes of all those captured and killed in the deadly ethnic violence that has gripped Manipur since May last year.

"I thought we wouldn't [make it alive], honestly," Guite told Al Jazeera. Within an hour, she saw smoke billowing from their village. Early the next morning, soldiers of the Indian army, deployed to contain the violence, arrived.

A 40-year-old man was missing. Residents said he had been abducted. The incident at Vengnuam encapsulates the ethnic tensions in the state, where clashes between the predominantly Hindu Meitei community, who are in a majority, and the mainly Christian Kuki-Zo tribe have so far claimed more than 220 lives and displaced 67,000 others, according to the government data.

The Vengnuam attack followed tensions in Jiribam district after the decomposed body of Seigoulen Singson, a 21-year-old from the Kuki-Zo community, was discovered weeks earlier. Singson had been missing since 14 May.

Mainly Christian Kuki-Zo tribe have so far claimed more than 220 lives
PHOTO: ANI

On 6 June, two days after the main Opposition Indian National Congress party trounced the governing BJP in both the parliamentary constituencies in Manipur, the dead body of 59-year-old Soibam Saratkumar Singh, a Meitei, was found by the locals after he had been missing for more than a week.

The Meitei alleged that Kuki-Zo tribals were behind the murder. Kuki-Zo leaders denied involvement, blaming the killing on rival Meitei armed groups instead. As the news of the arson at Vengnuam spread, Meiteis living in the area feared a counterattack and requested to be moved to safety by the authorities. Within hours of their evacuation to a relief camp, Lamtai Khunou, a Meitei village, was set on fire.

'Suffered under BJP rule'

As India concluded its weeks-long general election on June 4, which saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi return to power for a record third term, tensions in the remote Manipur state remain at a boil.

Critics have accused the BJP, which heads the Manipur government, of using the violence for political gains — a charge the party and state government deny. Many in the state view the BJP's defeat in the parliamentary election as a rejection of its alleged role in the continuing violence.

Guite told Al Jazeera that exercising her franchise was important and the only way to register her discontent at the government's failure to control the killings. She, however, added that the sense of hope generated among her Kuki-Zo tribe by the election results was lost on her after the Vengnuam incident.

Manipur has long witnessed tensions between the Meiteis, who constitute about 60 percent of its population and are concentrated in the more prosperous valley areas around the state capital, Imphal, and the minority Kuki-Zo and Naga tribes who live in the hill districts surrounding the valley.

India's constitution identifies dozens of historically marginalised tribes as eligible for the government's affirmative action programmes.

A local court in March 2023 recommended that the ST status should also be extended to the Meiteis. The court order – rescinded in February this year – set off a chain of events that eventually led to one of India's worst civil wars. As tribal groups held protest marches across the hill districts, demanding the withdrawal of the court order, there were fears of a Meitei backlash.

Tense elections

The violence forced the authorities to hold the general election on Manipur's two seats in two phases –19 April and 26 April. Despite massive security, several incidents of violence and alleged vote rigging were reported, forcing repolling in about a dozen booths.

On 19 April, Sarah Takhelmayum, a 21-year-old social worker from Imphal, was one of the first to cast her vote in Moirang, part of the Inner Manipur constituency. As she returned home, she received several calls about violence at some polling booths in the area. Soon, videos of voters running away in despair, with gunshots being heard around them began circulating on social media.

Takhelmayum said her mother was adamant about casting her vote as news of alleged voter repression streamed in. On their way to the polling station in Moirang, they heard gunshots and a stream of Arambai Tenggol vehicles moving in the area. Takhelmayum said she saw men with guns threatening the people. "By 10am, everybody was up in arms, alleging that they were being stopped from voting. The resentment against the BJP was out in the open," said Takhelmayum.

Will Congress win ensure peace?

However, even many Meiteis said they had not imagined the BJP could be defeated in Manipur. Takhelmayum said she was shocked when she heard about the election results. "Even if we wanted to vote them out, we felt that we were nothing in front of the muscle power and notoriety that the BJP yields in Manipur," she told Al Jazeera.

"This victory marks the beginning of a new politics in Manipur where younger people, more deserving people, influenced electoral politics than the usual 'contractors', 'social workers' and corrupt retired bureaucrats, backed by their militias," Samom said. *—Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

SALAR ساڈا

Simply looking at greenery can boost mental health

It is becoming increasingly clear that spending time in nature can benefit our mental health and wellbeing. But a new study by my colleagues and me shows that you don't have to actually be in nature to reap the rewards. Simply directing your gaze towards natural elements, even in the middle of a city, can enhance wellbeing.

Our paper, published in the journal People and Nature, used eye-tracking technology to explore how focusing on natural versus man-made elements affects mental health.

Urban living, with its fast pace and high levels of stress, has been linked to numerous mental health issues, including anxiety and depression.

Our research team, which was led by me and consisting of my colleagues Brian Rizowy and Assaf Shwartz, recruited 117 adults for the study.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: one that focused on natural elements such as trees (green group), one that focused on man-made elements such as buildings (grey group) and a third group that focused on a mix of both (mixed group).

Each participant wore specialised eye-tracking glasses during a 45-minute guided walk around town and the campus.

The route included ten designated stopping points designed to emphasise either natural or man-made elements, depending on the group.

Before and after the walk, participants completed surveys assessing their mood, anxiety levels and the restorative quality of the walk. The surveys included standardised measures such as the positive and negative affect schedule (Panas) and the state-trait anxiety inventory (Stai).

The eye-tracking glasses recorded where participants were looking throughout the walk, allowing researchers to quantify the amount of time spent focusing on green (natural) or grey (man-made) elements. In fact, our technique offered a precise and objective measure of visual engagement, strengthening the link between nature exposure and improved wellbeing. The data confirmed that each group really did spend more time looking at the scenery we had asked them to focus on.

The results were striking. Participants who focused more on green elements reported significant improvements in mood and reductions in anxiety compared to those who focused on grey elements. And they showed higher levels of positive emotions and lower levels of anxiety after the walk. They also reported feeling more refreshed and rejuvenated.

In contrast, the grey group did not show these improvements, and the mixed group had intermediate results, suggesting that even a partial focus on nature can be beneficial.

Implications for urban planning

These findings have important implications for urban planning and mental health practices. Designing urban spaces that incorporate natural elements and encourage visual engagement with nature could help reduce the mental health burden of city living.

For instance, planners could prioritise green spaces, tree-lined streets, parks and ponds that invite people to pause and take in the natural beauty.

The findings could also be useful for mental health professionals. For example, they may want to incorporate guided attention exercises into therapy, encouraging patients to specifically focus on natural elements during walks or other outdoor activities. This simple, cost-effective strategy could enhance traditional treatments for anxiety and depression.

The study highlights the importance of visual engagement with nature, providing robust evidence that the mental health benefits of nature are closely tied to where we focus our attention.

For the average person, this study suggests an easy way to boost mental health: spend more time looking at trees, flowers and other natural elements. Whether during a daily commute, a walk in the park or a weekend hike, consciously directing your gaze towards nature could make a significant difference in how you feel.

Our research underscores the potential for simple, everyday actions to have a profound impact on mental health. As urban areas continue to grow, integrating natural elements into cityscapes and encouraging people to engage visually with these elements could play a crucial role in enhancing public wellbeing.

—The Conversation

They report also highlighted that greenery in the road feeling more refreshed and rejuvenated
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

'Violence against children during conflicts reached extreme levels in 2023'

Violence against children caught in multiplying and escalating conflicts reached "extreme levels" in 2023, with an unprecedented number of killings and injuries in crises, from Israel and the Palestinian territories to Sudan, Myanmar and Ukraine, according to a new UN report.

The annual report on Children in Armed Conflict, obtained on Tuesday by The Associated Press, reported "a shocking 21 per cent increase in grave violations" against children under the age of 18 in an array of conflicts, also citing Congo, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Syria.

For the first time, the UN report put Israeli forces on its blacklist of countries that violate children's rights for the killing and maiming of children and attacking schools and hospitals. It listed Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants for the first time as well for killing, injuring and abducting children.

Hamas' 7 October surprise attack in southern Israe l and Israel's massive military retaliation in Gaza have led to a 155% increase in grave violations against children, especially from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in Gaza, said the report by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

The United Nations kept the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups on its blacklist for a second year over their killing and maiming of children and attacking schools and hospitals in Ukraine. The U.N. verified the killing of 80 Ukrainian children and maiming of 419 others by Russian forces and their affiliates last year, most from explosive weapons, the report said.

Sudan, where a war between rival generals vying for power has been raging since 2023, witnessed "a staggering 480 per cent increase in grave violations against children, the report said.

The Sudanese Armed Forces and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces went on the blacklist for killing and injuring youngsters and attacking schools and hospitals — and the paramilitary also for recruiting and using children in military operations and for rape and sexual violence.

By the end of 2023, secretary-general Guterres said the UN had verified 1,721 grave violations against 1,526 children. "I am appalled by the dramatic increase in grave violations," he said, especially the recruitment, killing and maiming of children as well as sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals.

The annual report on Children in Armed Conflict, obtained by Associated Press, reported "a shocking 21 per cent increase in grave violations ***PHOTO: EPA***

The growing civil war in Myanmar also saw a 123 per cent increase in grave violations against children and the Myanmar armed forces and related militias and seven armed groups are also on this year's blacklist. The report said the UN verified 2,799 grave violations against 2,093 children – including 238 killings and 623 injuries attributed to the military and its allied militias.

The United Nations verified 30,705 violations against children in 2023 and 2,285 committed earlier, affecting over 15,800 boys and more than 6,250 girls. Some were subjected to multiple violations, the report said.

While armed groups were responsible for almost 50% of the grave violations, it said, "government forces were the main perpetrator of the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access."

Guterres said the alarming increase in violations is due to "the changing nature, complexity, expansion and intensification of armed conflict, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians" and infrastructure and other essential buildings, as well as the emergence of new armed groups, acute humanitarian emergencies, and "blatant disregard" for international law.

- The Sudanese Armed Forces and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces went on the blacklist for killing and injuring youngsters and attacking schools and hospitals — and the paramilitary also for recruiting and using children in military operations and for rape and sexual violence

The UN chief said he is "appalled by the dramatic increase and unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children in the Gaza Strip, Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, despite my repeated calls for parties to implement measures to prevent grave violations."

Guterres said he was shocked by Hamas and Islamic Jihad's killing, maiming and abduction of children on 7 October, saying nothing can justify these "brutal acts of terror." And he said he was appalled at reports of sexual violence during the attacks which must be investigated. *—AP*

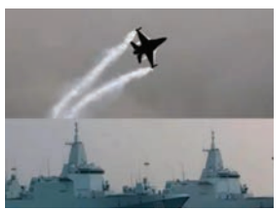


PHOTO: ANI

Taiwan detects 13 Chinese military aircrafts, 9 vessels

TAIPEI, 12 JUNE

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) has said that 13 Chinese military aircraft and nine Chinese naval vessels were detected operating around Taiwan from 6 am (local time) on Monday to 9 am (local time) on Tuesday. Of the 13 Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, 9 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered the Southwest and Southeast parts of Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), according to Taiwan's MND. In response to China's action, Taiwan's armed forces monitored the situation and responded accordingly. On X, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence stated, "13 #PLA aircraft and 9 PLAN vessels operating around #Taiwan were detected up until 6 am today. *—ANI*

Regroup to defeat far rights leaders, urges Macron

PARIS, 12 JUNE

French President Emmanuel Macron urged Wednesday moderate politicians from the left and the right to regroup to defeat the far right in the upcoming national legislative elections he had called for after his party's crushing defeat in the European Parliamentary vote. A somber-looking Macron addressed French voters for the first time since his stunning decision on Sunday to dissolve the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament. His move triggered an early legislative election that will take place in two rounds on 30 June and 7 July after the far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen triumphed at the election for theParliament.Macron said he decided on the risky move because he could not ignore the new political reality after his pro-European party was handed a chastening defeat. *—AP*

Ex- Chinese navy captain held for illegal entry: Taiwan

TAIPEI, 12 JUNE

A Chinese man who was arrested on Sunday for unlawfully entering Taipei harbour in a speedboat is a former navy commander who may have been on a military probe, Al Jazeera reported. According to the Taiwan authorities, after travelling in his little boat across the 160 km Taiwan Strait, which divides the island nation from China, the guy was taken into custody by Taiwan's coast guard. He told the authorities that he wanted to defect. However, officials said, he might have been gauging Taiwan's reaction to his strategy. An investigation and questioning is underway of the 60-year-old, who Taiwan claimed was an officer in China's People's Liberation Army Navy with the surname Ruan, reported Al Jazeera. *—ANI*

Maldives faces high debt distress, World Bank warns

MALE, 12 JUNE

Highlighting that the Maldives has been spending "beyond its means" for decades, the World Bank has warned that the archipelagic nation faces high debt distress risk and financing challenges, making it vulnerable to shocks. World Bank Country Director for the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka Faris H Hadad-Zervos also said that the island nation's annual debt servicing needs are likely to be USD 512 million for the current and following years, and another USD 1.07 billion in 2026. Hadad-Zervos's statement, posted on his official X account, comes days after the Ministry of Finance here said that the public and publicly guaranteed debt is almost 110 per cent of Maldives' GDP. The nation had suffered badly due to the Covid-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns and started recovering only in 2023. *—PTI*

Hamas seeks changes to Gaza ceasefire plan

Qatar and Egypt confirmed they have recieved Hamas' respond

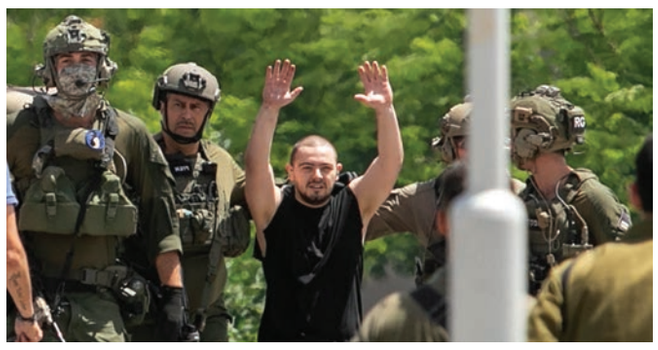
BEIRUT, 12 JUNE

Hamas said Tuesday that it gave mediators its reply to the US-backed proposal for a cease-fire in Gaza, seeking some "amendments" on the deal. It appeared the reply was short of an outright acceptance that the United States has been pushing for but kept negotiations alive over an elusive halt to the eight-month war.

The foreign ministries of Qatar and Egypt — who have been key mediators alongside the United States — confirmed that they had received Hamas' response and said mediators were studying it.

"We're in receipt of this reply that Hamas delivered to Qatar and to Egypt, and we are evaluating it right now," White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters in Washington. Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said the response included "amendments that confirm the cease-fire, withdrawal, reconstruction and (prisoner) exchange." Taha did not elaborate.

But while supporting the broad outlines of the deal, Hamas officials have expressed wariness over whether Israel would implement its terms, particularly provisions for an eventual permanent end to fighting and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in return for the release of all hostages held by the militants.



The foreign ministries of Qatar and Egypt— who have been key mediators confirmed that they had received Hamas' response PHOTO: PTI

Even as the US has said Israel accepted the proposal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has given conflicting signals, saying Israel will not stop until its goal of destroying Hamas is achieved. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has been in the region this week trying to push through the deal — his eighth visit since Hamas' 7 October attack on southern Israel ignited Israel's campaign in Gaza. On Tuesday, he continued pressure on Hamas to accept the proposal, saying that the UN Security Council's vote in its favour made it "as clear as it possibly could be" that the world supports the plan.

"Everyone's vote is in, except for one vote, and that's Hamas," Blinken told reporters in Tel Aviv after meeting with Israeli officials, hours before Hamas announced its reply. He said Netanyahu had reaffirmed his commitment to the proposal when they met late Monday. *—AP*

Hezbollah fires scores of rockets at northern Israel

BEIRUT, 12 JUNE

Lebanon's Hezbollah fired a massive barrage of rockets into northern Israel on Wednesday to avenge the killing of a top commander, further escalating regional tensions as the fate of an internationally-backed plan for a cease-fire in Gaza hung in the balance. The retaliatory attack came as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in the region to push a cease-fire proposal with global support that has not been fully embraced by Israel or Hamas. *—AP*

MANY INJURED

Russia fires more missiles and drones at Ukraine

KYIV, 12 JUNE

- Ukraine's air force said it shot down 29 out of 30 air targets, including four cruise missiles, one Kinzhal ballistic missile, and 24 Shahed drones. Several people were injured

Russian forces fired missiles and drones at the Kyiv region and five other areas of Ukraine in a nighttime attack, officials said Wednesday, ahead of several days of intense diplomatic activity around the war that is now in its third year.

Ukraine's air force said it shot down 29 out of 30 air targets, including four cruise missiles, one Kinzhal ballistic missile, and 24 Shahed drones. Several people were injured, authorities said. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised the air force's response, calling it a "daily achievement". He has repeatedly appealed to Ukraine's Western partners to provide more air defence systems, and the United States has agreed to send another Patriot missile system, two US officials said late Tuesday.

How best to support Ukraine's efforts to stop Russia's invasion will be a central issue in international meetings in coming days.

Kyiv's outgunned and outnumbered forces are battling to hold back the bigger Russian army, which is trying to exploit Ukrainian vulnerabilities. Ukraine has been short of troops, ammunition and air defences in recent months as the Kremlin's forces try to cripple the national power supply and punch through the front line in eastern parts of the country. Ukraine will need to weather the Russian onslaught through the summer, military analysts say, and in the meantime train more soldiers, build fortifications and hope that the provision of Western military aid picks up speed so that in 2025 Kyiv may be able to mount its own offensive.

Leaders of the Group of Seven rich democracies, including US President Joe Biden, are due to gather Thursday in Italy for their annual summit to discuss how to squeeze more money for Ukraine from Russian assets frozen in their countries. *—AP*

UK economy flatlined in April ahead of the 4 July election

LONDON, 12 JUNE

Rishi Sunak PHOTO: PTI

The British economy failed to grow in April, official figures showed Wednesday, in a blow to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who has made the return of growth and a generally calmer economic backdrop a central pillar of the Conservative Party's election campaign. The Office for National Statistics said wet weather dampened consumer spending and construction during the month. The flat monthly reading came after a 0.6 per cent increase during the first quarter of the year, which Sunak has made much of on the campaign trail following a period of muted growth. *—AP*

Kim hails ties with Russia ahead of Putin's visit

SEOUL, 12 JUNE

Kim Jong Un PHOTO: ANI

- Kim sent Putin a congratulatory message commemorating Russia's National Day, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hailed the country's expanding relationship with Russia on Wednesday, as reports suggest that Russian President Vladimir Putin will soon visit the country for his third meeting with Kim.

Military, economic and other cooperation between North Korea and Russia have sharply increased since Kim visited Russia last September for a meeting with Putin.

The US, South Korea and their partners believe North Korea has supplied artillery, missiles and other conventional weapons to Russia to support its war in Ukraine in return for advanced military technologies and economic aid.

Kim has been pushing to boost partnerships with Russia and China in a bid to strength his regional footing and launch a united front against the United States. During their September meeting at Russia's main space launch site, Kim invited the Russian president to visit North Korea at "a convenient time," and Putin accepted.

On Wednesday, Kim sent Putin a congratulatory message commemorating Russia's National Day, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

"Thanks to the significant meeting between us at the Vostochney Spaceport in September last year, (North Korea)-Russia friendly and cooperative relations developed into an unbreakable relationship of comrades-in-arms," Kim said in the message.

Kim's comments came as media reports said Putin is expected to visit North Korea as early as next week. If realised, it would their third summit meeting.

Their first summit happened in Vladivostok in April 2019. Japanese public broadcaster NHK, citing unidentified diplomatic sources including high-ranking Russian officials, reported Wednesday that Putin is preparing to visit North Korea and Vietnam next week. *—AP*

US WILL SEND UKRAINE ANOTHER MISSILE SYSTEM

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

The United States will send Ukraine another Patriot missile system, two US officials said Tuesday, answering Kyiv's desperate calls for more air defences as it battles an intense Russian assault on the northeastern Kharkiv region. The official said President Joe Biden has approved the move. It would be the second Patriot system that the US has given to Ukraine, although the Pentagon has routinely provided an undisclosed number of missiles for the system. Other allies, including Germany, also have provided air defense systems as well as munitions for them. *—AP*

Hong Kong cancels passports of 6 activists

HONG KONG, 12 JUNE

The Hong Kong government on Wednesday cancelled the passports of six overseas-based activists under the new national security law, stepping up its crackdown on dissidents who moved abroad.

Among them were former pro-democracy lawmaker Nathan Law, unionist Mung Siu-tat and activists Simon Cheng, Finn Lau, Johnny Fok and Tony Choi - all accused of endangering national security by authorities in the southern Chinese city. The government said they have "absconded" to the UK.

Last year, police offered rewards of $1,28,000 each for information leading to their arrests and drew sharp criticism from Western governments.

According to the official statement, authorities also banned anyone from providing funds or economic resources to the six, leasing properties to them or forming any joint venture with them, among other restrictions. Doing so without authorisation would carry a penalty of up to seven years in prison.

The government said it acted because the six were continuing to engage in activities that endanger national security, smearing the city and colluding with external forces.

Secretary for Security Chris Tang said in a news briefing that some officials, politicians and media outlets in the UK have attempted to damage the rule of law in the financial hub and tried to influence judicial decisions in some national security cases.

The six activists have been sheltered in the UK, Tang said. "We have to combat, deter and to prevent those people who have committed the offences relating to endangering national security through absconds," he said. *—AP*

KING'S CHARITY AWARDS

British pop icon Rod Stewart, ex-footballer David Beckham, and actress Sienna Miller speak to King Charles III, as they attend the inaugural King's Foundation charity awards at St James's Palace in London PHOTO: AP/PTI

YEAR-LONG INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this record was to document the five travelers' fruitless attempts to return to the surface PHOTO: PTI

Titan submarine communication logs found to be fake

LONDON, 12 JUNE

A transcript that allegedly described the conversations between the people on board the deadly Titan submersible and its mother ship during the June descent towards the Titanic catastrophe has been exposed as being entirely fabricated.

When the communications record was made public last summer, it raised red flags because it revealed a sequence of concerning occurrences that transformed a descent to the bottom of the Atlantic into a last-ditch battle for survival.

The purpose of this record was to document the five travelers' fruitless attempts to return to the surface. However, the leader of the federal investigation team in the US has since stated that the transcript is wholly fake.

Following an extensive investigation that lasted nearly a year, the team was unable to uncover any evidence suggesting the Titan's occupants were aware of the impending catastrophic implosion that would ultimately result in their deaths.

The pressures at the two miles below the surface where the tragedy happened would have instantly caused the submersible's hull to disintegrate.

"I have no doubt that this transcript is fake." Chairman of the Marine Board of Investigation and retired US Coast Guard officer Captain Jason D Neubauer said, "It was made up." It's unclear who the fake document's initial source was.

When the fake transcript surfaced in late June, it purported to show minute-by-minute conversations full of technical terms and accurate descriptions, including acronyms specific to the Titan that gave it a genuine feel.

It appeared that the Titan's crew was dealing with hull alarms and cracking sounds in a panic before communications suddenly cut off. The Real Time Hull Health Monitoring system, or RTM, was the main subject of the transcript.

—Courtesy, The Metro

Muhammad Yunus PHOTO: PTI

Nobel laureate Yunus convicted in labour law case

DHAKA, 12 JUNE

A special judge's court in Bangladesh indicted Wednesday Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus and 13 others on charges in an over USD 2 million embezzlement case.

Yunus, 83, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for pioneering microcredit to help impoverished people, especially women, pleaded not guilty and is out on bail for now. He told reporters that authorities were "harassing" him and other colleagues and denied being involved in any corruption.

In a packed Dahka courtroom, Special Judge in Dhaka Syed Arafat Hossain dismissed petitions seeking the charges — which centres around Yunus' non-profit Grameen Telecom — to be dropped.

The prosecution has accused Yunus and the others of embezzling 250 million takas (about USD 2 million) from the workers welfare fund of Grameen Telecom, which owns 34.2 per cent of the country's largest mobile phone company, Grameenphone, a subsidiary of Norway's telecom giant Telenor. They are also accused of money laundering.

Hossain, the judge, said the prosecution was able to preliminarily back their argument and proved the charges of misappropriation of funds and sending money abroad illegally, adding the trial is to start on 15 July. Last year, more than 170 global leaders and Nobel laureates urged Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to suspend legal proceedings against Yunus. *—AP*

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.56 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Rupee appreciated 3 paise to close at 83.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on positive domestic market, wherein benchmark sensitive index Nifty touched a fresh all-time high. Forex traders said rupee is trading in a narrow range as all eyes are on the US May CPI print and the US Federal Reserve's rate decision on the global front and India's Consumer Price Index (CPI) on the domestic front. Moreover, the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and elevated crude oil prices weighed on the local unit and restricted the upmove. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.56. During the trading session, the rupee touched an intraday high of 83.51 and a low of 83.56. It finally settled for the day at 83.56 (provisional) against the greenback, registering an increase of 3 paise from its previous closing level. On Tuesday, the rupee settled for the day lower by 9 paise at 83.59 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Gold climbs ₹250; silver jumps ₹800 amid strong mkt

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Gold prices climbed Rs 250 to Rs 72,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at Rs 71,950 per 10 grams. Silver prices also bounced by Rs 800 to Rs 91,500 per kg. It had settled at Rs 90,700 per kg in the previous session. "In the Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,200 per 10 grams, up by Rs 250 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,315 per ounce, up USD 12 from the previous close. Gold extended its gains on Wednesday, helped by a soft US Treasury yield and a steady US dollar, Gandhi said. *—PTI*

Startup Foxtale raises $18M in funding round

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

D2C skincare brand Foxtale on Wednesday said it has raised USD 18 million (about Rs 150 crore) in a funding round led by Singapore-based Panthera Growth Partners and plans to deploy the fresh capital towards category expansion and top-level hiring. The Series B funding round also saw participation from the company's returning investors Matrix Partners India and Kae Capital. Founded by Romita Mazumdar, the Mumbai-based startup commenced operations in January 2022 and has a vast customer base spanning over 100 Indian cities. *—PTI*

Dee Development Engineers eyes ₹418cr via IPO

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Piping solutions provider Dee Development Engineers Ltd on Wednesday said it is looking to raise Rs 418 crore through its initial share sale, which will open for public subscription on 19 June. The issue, with a price band of Rs 193-203 apiece, will conclude on 21 June. The bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on 18 June. The initial share sale comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 325 crore and an offer for sale of 45.82 lakh equity shares valued at Rs 93 crore by promoter and CMD Krishan Lalit Bansal at the upper end of the price band. This takes the IPO size to Rs 418 crore. Of Rs 325 crore proceeds, Rs 175 crore will be used for payment of debt, Rs 75 crore for funding the working capital requirements, and the remaining 75 crore will be used for general corporate purposes, the company's CFO Sameer Agarwal said. *—PTI*

Nifty hits fresh all-time high; Sensex climbs 150 points

Sensex climbs 149.98 points or 0.20% to settle at 76,606.57

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Benchmark equity indices ended higher on Wednesday, with the Nifty hitting its fresh record closing level, mainly due to buying in power, capital goods and industrial stocks amid a largely positive trend in global equities.

Besides, a heavy rush on select index-heavyweight counters like HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries boosted investors' sentiment, traders said.

In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 149.98 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 76,606.57. During the day, it jumped 593.94 points or 0.77 per cent to 77,050.53. The BSE benchmark is just 28.51 points away from breaching its previous lifetime peak of 77,079.04.

The NSE Nifty went up by 177.1 points or 0.76 per cent to hit its new all-time intra-day high of 23,441.95. It ended at a new closing peak of 23,322.95, up 58.10 points or 0.25 per cent.

"After showing a decisive upside bounce on Wednesday, Nifty continued with a follow-through up-move on Thursday and closed the day higher by 201 points. After opening on a positive note, the market continued to move up for the better part of the session. Intraday weakness in between has been used as a buying opportunity," Nagaraj Shetti, Senior Technical Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

Power Grid was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 2.54 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv and HCL Technologies.

In contrast, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and Titan were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.07 per cent and smallcap index climbed 1.06 per cent.

Power Grid is the biggest gainer *PHOTO: PTI*

Among the sectoral indices, industrials, power, capital goods, energy, commodities, healthcare, and metal were among the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, realty and FMCG were the laggards.

"The domestic market is trading at new high on expectations of the final budget with a focus on growth, which was amplified by the RBI's upgrade in GDP growth forecast," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai settled in the positive territory, while Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading mostly with gains during the mid-session deals. US markets ended mostly higher on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.16 per cent to USD 82.87 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 111.04 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. *—PTI*

CONSUMPTION TO RISE

India will be world's biggest oil demand driver, says IEA

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, will in the second half of the decade become the driver of global oil demand, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Wednesday, forecasting rise in consumption by a massive 1.3 million barrels between 2023 and 2030.

In its Oil 2024 Report, the Paris-based energy watchdog said India's oil demand is forecast to grow more than any country's other than China between 2023 and 2030.

India's oil demand is projected to rise from 5.4 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2023 to 6.7 million bpd by 2030, a growth of 3.2 per cent or 1.3 million bpd. "Unusually, in a global context, an increase of more than 1.3 million bpd will be dominated by rising demand for road transport fuels, with a comparatively small role for petrochemical feedstocks and underlying growth comfortably outpacing deployment of clean energy technologies.

"In the second half of this decade, India will become by far the most important contributor to overall growth," it said. India's oil demand rising by 900,000 bpd between 2025 and 2030 will be well ahead of China's 570,000 bpd and three-quarters of net global gains, it said.

For the world, IEA forecast oil demand peaking by 2029 and beginning to contract the next year. The oil demand growth in India is primarily driven by its fast expanding economy. India is set to be the world's fastest growing major economy for the third year running in 2024. Manufacturing and industrial activity has been especially strong and a massive domestic consumer market, labour force and supportive demographics should see this continue. The nation's population, which recently overtook China's to become the world's largest, is projected to increase by 6 per cent between 2023 and 2030, and higher average incomes will further support mobility demand. IEA said its projections assume a roughly 40 per cent increase in the size of the car fleet by 2030. *—ANI*

Sitharaman assumes charge as Fin Minister

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday assumed charge as the Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister for the second consecutive term and is slated to soon present the final Budget for FY '25, that is going to set the tone for the Modi 3.0 government's priorities and direction for Viksit Bharat.

Upon her reaching the North Block office, Sitharaman was greeted by Finance Secretary TV Somanathan and other top officials.

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary was also present. Chaudhary assumed charge on Tuesday evening.

After assuming charge, the Finance and Corporate Affairs minister was briefed on the ongoing policy issues by the Secretaries of the different departments, an official statement said.

She noted that the government is fully committed to ensuring 'Ease of Living' for its citizens and will continue to take further steps in this regard. Sitharaman also stated that the reforms undertaken since 2014 will continue, which will further provide macroeconomic stability and growth for India.

Nirmala Sitharaman *PHOTO: PTI*

She also highlighted India's commendable growth story in recent years amidst global challenges and noted that there is an optimistic economic outlook for the coming years.

She urged the departments to advance the NDA government's development agenda with renewed vigour and ensure responsive policymaking to achieve the Prime Minister's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'. *—PTI*

ALLEGED MISCONDUCT

Axis Bank slapped with fine of ₹1.66 crore over NSG fraud

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The Financial Intelligence Unit has slapped a fine of more than Rs 1.66 crore on Axis Bank for "failing" to put in place a mechanism to detect and report suspicious transactions carried out at one of its branches by creating a "fraud" account in the name of counter-terrorist commando force NSG. The federal agency has issued an order on 3 June under Section 13 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) that empowers its Director to impose a monetary penalty on a reporting entity (like Axis Bank) if the agency finds that its designated director on the board or any of its employees failed to comply with the obligations mandated under the said law.

A query sent to Axis Bank did not elicit an immediate response.

PHOTO: PTI

According to the summary order accessed by PTI, the case pertains to an instance where "an employee of Axis Bank was alleged to have been complicit in a large-scale fraud and corruption scandal, in collusion with others."

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) order said this "alleged misconduct pertained to the creation of a fraudulent bank account in the name of the National Security Guard (NSG), a government agency."

"Reports indicated that a manager at Axis Bank played a role in establishing this account, purportedly for the purpose of aggregating illicit funds," the order said. A total fine of Rs 1,66,25,000 was issued by the FIU against the bank on alleged charges of violation of the anti-money laundering law, the order said.

The FIU, under the Union Finance Ministry, is an agency entrusted with implementing certain sections of the anti-money laundering law like the Enforcement Directorate (ED). It (FIU) conducts examination of steps taken to check money laundering and other financial frauds, by banks and other financial institutions designated as 'reporting entities' under the PMLA, in the financial channels of the country. According to PMLA, reporting entities include banks, stock exchanges, insurance companies and other financial bodies. *—PTI*

SPICEJET HALTS HYD-AYODHYA DIRECT FLIGHT

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

Ajay Singh-promoted no-frills carrier SpiceJet has discontinued its direct flight services to Ayodhya from Hyderabad within two months of its launch, citing demand issue.

The Gurugram-based airline had started its three times a week non-stops flight services on the Hyderabad-Ayodhya route from early April this year.

"SpiceJet has discontinued its non-stop flight services to Ayodhya from Hyderabad from June 1," a source at the GMR Group-operated Hyderabad International Airport said.

The airline was operating these services thrice a week to the temple town from the Telangana capital.

"Flight schedule is driven solely by commercial considerations and demand," SpiceJet spokesperson said in a statement.

"(But) we are still operating the services to Chennai from Ayodhya," the spokesperson said.

The Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in Ayodhya was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 30 December.

Significantly, SpiceJet had operated a special flight to Ayodhya from the national capital on 21 January for flying people attending the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple. *—PTI*

CIPL bags ₹114 crore IT infra work

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Technology solutions company CIPL on Wednesday said it has secured a Rs 114-crore project from Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for the comprehensive maintenance of IT infrastructure of the public sector petroleum major. The contract will be carried out over a period of three years, starting from June 2024 and ending in May 2027. "Corporate Infotech Pvt. Ltd. (CIPL) has secured a landmark contract from Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for the comprehensive annual maintenance of IT infrastructure across all divisions of the state-owned company," CIPL said in a statement.

- CIPL will deploy more than 400 engineers to manage the regular maintenance of IT infrastructure across 131 locations of Indian Oil nationwide

As part of the contract, CIPL will deploy more than 400 engineers to manage the regular maintenance of IT infrastructure across 131 locations of Indian Oil nationwide.

"The contract, valued at Rs 114 crore, pertains to annual maintenance and Facility Management Services (FMS) for all divisions of Indian Oil across the country," the statement further said. CIPL has earlier served several Public Sector Undertakings like ONGC, SPMCIL, PFMS, NTPC and Airport Authority of India. It had secured a Rs 137-crore contract from state-owned Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) in August last year. *—PTI*

GLENMARK PHARMA RECEIVES USFDA APPROVAL TO MARKET GENERIC DRUG

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Drug firm Glenmark on Wednesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic medication to treat conditions caused by too much acid production in the stomach.

Glenmark Specialty SA has received final approval from the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) for Esomeprazole Magnesium delayed-release capsules, the drug maker said in a statement. The company's product is the generic version of Haleon US Holdings LLC's Nexium.

According to Nielsen syndicated data for the latest 52-week period ending May 18, 2024, the Nexium24 HR delayed-release capsules (20 mg) achieved annual sales of around USD 259.2 million.

Shares of Glenmark were trading 0.55 per cent down at Rs 1,185 apiece on the BSE. *—PTI*

Feminine profile pictures is another online lure for many men *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Why Big Tech use faux females to get clicks

WASHINGTON, 12 JUNE

When disinformation researcher Wen-Ping Liu looked into China's efforts to influence Taiwan's recent election using fake social media accounts, something unusual stood out about the most successful profiles.

They were female, or at least that's what they appeared to be. Fake profiles that claimed to be women got more engagement, more eyeballs and more influence than supposedly male accounts.

"Pretending to be a female is the easiest way to get credibility," said Liu, an investigator with Taiwan's Ministry of Justice.

Whether it's Chinese or Russian propaganda agencies, online scammers or AI chatbots, it pays to be female - proving that while technology may grow more and more sophisticated, the human brain remains surprisingly easy to hack thanks in part to age-old gender stereotypes that have migrated from the real world to the virtual. Feminine profile pictures, particularly ones showing women with flawless skin, lush lips and wide eyes in revealing outfits, can be another online lure for many men. *—PTI*

MUSK DROPS CASE AGAINST OPENAI, SAM ALTMAN

CALIFORNIA, 12 JUNE

Elon Musk has unexpectedly asked a California court to withdraw a legal case against OpenAI and its boss Sam Altman, which accused them of abandoning the firm's founding mission of developing artificial intelligence (AI) for humanity's benefit.

The filing submitted by the multi-billionaire's lawyers asked for the months-old case to be dropped without offering any reason for the move.

The latest filing asked for the case's dismissal "without prejudice", meaning Musk could still reactivate it at a later stage.

He filed the lawsuit against OpenAI at the end of February this year, arguing the company he had helped found in 2015 had deviated from its altruistic goals to focus on making money.

OpenAI countered that Musk had previously backed the idea of a for-profit structure and even suggested a merger with his electric car firm Tesla. *—BBC News*

MUSK UNDER FIRE

Musk has unusual relationships with women at SpaceX: Report

CALIFORNIA, 12 JUNE

Elon Musk had a sexual relationship with a former SpaceX intern, who he later hired onto his executive team, according to The Wall Street Journal. He also had a sexual relationship with a second employee. And a third woman alleged that Musk asked her several times to have his children; she refused. He then denied her a raise and complained about her performance.

One of the women who Musk had a sexual relationship also drew the ire of SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell, who accused her of having an affair with Shotwell's husband. When the woman reported this to HR, HR told Shotwell. "Shotwell told the HR department at SpaceX that she wanted the woman removed from the office of the chief executive," The Wall Street Journal wrote. The Journal's article cites text messages, emails, and other documents. It is based on interviews with more than 48 people, including friends and family members of the women, as well as former employees.

Elon Musk *PHOTO: PTI*

In 2021, five former SpaceX employees said there was a "culture of sexual harassment". One of those women described multiple instances of being groped. A 2022 story reported that a flight attendant on Musk's private jet said he exposed himself and offered "to buy her a horse in exchange for an erotic massage," according to Business Insider. Earlier this year, a former SpaceX employee filed a lawsuit alleging sexual abuse and discrimination.

- SpaceX is also being investigated by civil rights agency over allegations that the company discriminates against women and retaliated against workers who raised concerns

SpaceX is also being investigated by civil rights agency over allegations that the company discriminates against women and retaliated against workers who raised concerns.

Courtesy, The Verge

T20 WORLD CUP

New Zealand face West Indies in virtual knockout

Rain threatens to derail England again

PHOTOS: X / @T20WORLDCUP

TAROUBA, 12 JUNE

Staring at early elimination, New Zealand will look to dish out a much-improved show in a do-or-die clash against tournament co-hosts West Indies in the T20 World Cup here.

New Zealand suffered a batting collapse to be bowled out for 75 in 15.2 overs in a stunning 84-run loss to Afghanistan in their tournament-opener at the Providence Stadium.

This loss dropped their run rate to -4.2, the lowest among the four teams in Group D, placing them at the bottom of the standings.

Now, they find themselves on the brink of a rare group stage exit an unexpected predicament for a team known for its remarkable consistency in World Cups, having reached the semi-finals in all six recent editions: the ODI World Cups of 2015, 2019, and 2023, and the T20 World Cups of 2016, 2021, and 2022.

Only two of their batters managed to score double digits and the Kane Williamson-led side will have to buck up as a batting unit to pose any challenge to the local favorites.

It's not just the batting, their fielding also put them down as they dropped easy chances, missed stumping, and run-out as the Afghanistan opening duo of Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran set it up with a solid 103-run opening stand.

West Indies on the other hand face no such issues as a Super Eight berth will be up for grabs if they manage to secure a third win on the trot.

The match starts at 6 am IST

Bangladesh and Netherlands hope to stay alive

Bangladesh and the Netherlands will look to keep their Super Eight hopes alive when they lock horns in a crucial Group D fixture at Kingstown.

In the group of death, South Africa has already made the cut and the fight is among Bangladesh, Netherlands, Nepal, and Sri Lanka to book the second slot.

Having started with a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka, a nervy Bangladesh let it slip against South Africa to go down by four runs in their last match.

Match starts: 8 pm IST

Rain threat for England vs Oman

Rain forecast has once again threatened to derail defending champions England who also are on the verge of an early exit and will face Oman in the first of their two must-win matches at North Sound.

England, who have just one point from two matches after a washout against Scotland, will face Namibia in their final group league clash at the same venue. There has been a rain forecast and Jos Buttler's men will have a watch on the sky.

Wins in both matches may not be enough for England as Scotland (5 points from three matches) are ahead of the race.

Scotland may get to seven points by a win over Australia and England's Super Eight hopes may eventually rest on the hands of their arch-rivals.

Match starts: 12.30 am IST (Friday). —*PTI*

Qatar's controversial goal — PHOTO: @INDIANFOOTBALL

AIFF seeks investigation into Qatar's controversial goal

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has complained to the match commissioner, seeking a probe into the controversial goal awarded to Qatar in their crucial World Cup qualifying match in Doha.

Sources in the AIFF said they have asked for a "thorough investigation into the goal" that was allowed by South Korean referee Kim Woo-Sung despite the ball going out of play during the must-win match that India lost 1-2 at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

The goal sparked widespread outrage as it deprived the Indians of what would have been their maiden entry into the third round of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers for the 2026 edition.

"We have lodged a complaint with the match commissioner and are seeking a thorough investigation into the whole thing," said an AIFF official.

Iran's Hamed Momeni was the match commissioner for the game. The role requires the appointed official to supervise the organization of the match and ensure that FIFA regulations are adhered to during the game.

In the 73rd minute, Abdullah Alahrak's free-kick saw Yousef Ayem attempt a header, which was saved by India skipper and goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. —*PTI*

There's nothing I can tell you now: Stimac on future

Under-pressure India football coach Igor Stimac was non-committal about his future with the team after it crashed out of the 2026 World Cup qualification race following a controversial 1-2 loss to Asian champions Qatar here. Qatar scored from a ball that had gone out of play to equalize before adding a second to send India out of contention from the third round of World Cup qualification.

PHOTO: PTI

Distinguished football coach TK Chathunni dies

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

Former Kerala footballer TK Chathunni, who made a name for himself as a renowned coach, died on Wednesday at the age of 75 in Kochi following a brief illness, the All India Football Federation said. He is survived by his wife and two daughters. He was a top-rated defender during the 1960s and 1970s and also played for India during the Merdeka Tournament 1973 in Kuala Lumpur. Having featured in six international matches for India, he also played for clubs like EME Centre (Secundrabad), Vasco Club (Goa), and Orkay Mills (Mumbai), besides also featuring for Services in the National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy.But it was in coaching where he made a name for himself, having been credited for unearthing talents like former greats IM Vijayan, Bruno Coutinho, and Jo Paul Anchery among others.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shardul undergoes successful foot surgery

LONDON, 12 JUNE

Team India all-rounder Shardul Thakur has undergone a successful foot surgery here on Wednesday and is expected to be out of competitive cricket for a minimum of three months. The 32-year-old shared a post-surgery photo on his Instagram page captioned: "Operated successfully".It happens to be his second-foot surgery after he had undergone the same five years back in 2019.The injury recurred during the South Africa tour earlier this year. Although he managed to make a bold return in the Ranji Trophy last season, helping Mumbai win its 42nd title, he had requested the BCCI for longer breaks between matches to ensure adequate recovery and preparation time for the players.In the Indian Premier League this season, playing for Chennai Super Kings, he managed only five wickets in nine outings at an economy of 9.75.—*PTI*

ICC Rankings: Nabi topples Shakib as No. 1 T20I all-rounder

DUBAI, 12 JUNE

Afghanistan's unbeaten start to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup has reshaped the ICC Men's T20I All-Rounder Rankings, with veteran star Mohammad Nabi leading the charge as the No. 1 all-rounder in the latest ICC T20I rankings. Nabi's two-wicket haul against New Zealand in Guyana catapulted him to the No. 1 spot on the T20I all-rounder list. Climbing two places, Nabi displaced previous top-ranked Shakib Al Hasan, who tumbled to fifth place amid a significant reshuffling. —*PTI*

Mohammad Nabi — PHOTO: PTI

WA signs 5-year broadcasting services

NEW DELHI, 12 JUNE

World Athletics on Wednesday announced a five-year global broadcasting services deal with Tata Communications, making the Indian telecom major a partner in the coverage of marquee events from next year, including the Tokyo World Championships.

Tata Communications will be a "key strategic supplier" for the world body with a view to "elevating innovation and audience engagement to new heights", World Athletics said in a statement.

PHOTO: @TATACOMPANIES

The year 2025 features events such as the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Nanjing in March, World Athletics Relays in Guangzhou in May, and World Athletics Road Running Championships in San Diego in September.

The biennial World Championships will be held from September 13 to 21 next year.

"As the host broadcaster of World Athletics Series events, Tata Communications will take on the pivotal role of crafting immersive coverage, and delivering customized, world-class live content across continents. —*PTI*

Amol Kale — PHOTO: PTI

MCA officials pay last respects to Amol Kale

MUMBAI, 12 JUNE

India and Mumbai players Ajinkya Rahane and Dhawal Kulkarni and several others from the cricketing fraternity on Wednesday paid their last respects to Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) president Amol Kale, who passed away in New York.

Kale's mortal remains were brought back to India on Wednesday afternoon after he died on the intervening night between June 9 and 10 due to a cardiac arrest.

The 47-year-old was in New York to watch India's match against Pakistan in the ongoing T20 World Cup along with a few other officials of the MCA as well as of the BCCI.

"Deeply saddened to hear about the sudden demise of MCA President Amol Kale. His dedication to Mumbai cricket was exemplary. Deepest condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time," BCCI secretary Jay Shah, who also watched the India-Pakistan game, wrote on his X account.

The secretary Ajinkya Naik, other association officials, and former India player and MCA's women's cricket advisor Diana Edulji were also present at the MCA Lounge at the Wankhede Stadium, where Kale's mortal remains were brought in for about an hour. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2024

Prannoy, Aakarshi through to second round

PARIS, 12 JUNE

India's H S Prannoy defeated Ygor Coelho of Brazil 21-10, 23-21 to enter the second round of the Australian Open on Wednesday. Sameer Verma and Kiran George made it through to the next round of the men's singles event with wins against Australia's Ricky Tang and Sheng Xiaodong of Canada, respectively.

In the women's singles, Aakarshi Kashyap and Anupama Upadhayya beat Ukraine's Polina Buhrova and Wong Ling Ching of Malaysia, respectively. The mixed doubles pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy edged past the Malaysian pair of Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien 21-17, 21-19. —*AP*

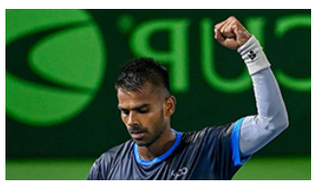
H S Prannoy — PHOTO: X/@PRANNOY_HS_

Nagal wins thriller against Giannessi

PERUGIA, 12 JUNE

Indian tennis star Sumit Nagal continued his fine form as he entered the quarterfinal of the ongoing Perugia Challenger here.

On Wednesday, the sixth-seeded Indian toppled unseeded local Alessandro Giannessi in a three-set thriller 0-6, 7-5, 7-6(7-5).Last week, India's top singles player won the Heilbronn Challenger in Germany.In the opening set, Nagal received heavy thrashing after the Italian blanked him 6-0.However, the 77th-ranked Indian did not back down from a fightback and kept things close in the following set before earning a lone break and winning the set 7-5 to take things to the decider.As for the final set, it was 'game on' for both the competitors, who eventually took to the tie-breaker, where Nagal survived to take the set 7-6(7-5). In the quarterfinal, the Indian will face off against the winner of the pre-quarterfinal clash between Maks Kasnikowski of Poland and third seed Borna Coric of Croatia. Earlier, in the opening round, Nagal had secured a straight-set 7-6(7-1), 6-2 victory over an unseeded Nerman Fatic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.Following the conquest at Heilbronn, the Indian has assured himself of a spot in the singles event of the Paris Olympics next month. —*PTI*



Sumit Nagal — PHOTO: PTI

Murray unsure of Paris 2024 Olympics

PARIS, 12 JUNE

Andy Murray may opt out of challenging for a third Olympic gold medal at the Paris Games next month if he is not selected to play in the doubles tournament, Britain's former world number one said.

The three-time Grand Slam winner and twice Olympic champion is eligible to compete in the singles at the Games with two places reserved for players who have previously won a Grand Slam or Olympics tournament.

However, Murray could miss out on the doubles in Paris with Britain set to send Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski instead.

"I need to see what happens with the Olympics," he told reporters after his 6-3, 6-4 defeat to Marcos Giron at the Stuttgart Open on Tuesday.

"I'm not 100% sure what the situation is there with the doubles yet and whether or not I will play if I just get in the singles. I don't know," he mused.

"My body didn't feel great playing on the clay in the last month or so. I had quite a few issues with my back, so I don't know if I would go just for singles."

"I need to wait a little bit and see on that," added the 37-year-old, who lost in the first round of the French Open doubles alongside Daniel Evans.

The tennis tournament at the Olympics will take place at Roland Garros from 27 July - 4 August. —*PTI*

Andy Murray — PHOTO: @ANDYMURRAY

- Andy Murray may opt out of challenging for a third Olympic gold medal at the Paris Games next month if he is not selected to play in the doubles tournament, Britain's former world number one said.

ASIAN QUALIFYING

China keeps its WC hopes alive despite a 1-0 loss to South Korea

SEOUL, 12 JUNE

China kept its 2026 World Cup hopes alive by the narrowest of margins despite a 1-0 loss to South Korea on Tuesday in Asian qualifying.

China advanced to the third qualification round because Thailand, needing to beat Singapore by three goals, only won 3-1.

South Korea finished the second round of continental qualifying atop Group C and remains on course for an 11th straight World Cup appearance.

Six of the 18 Asian teams in the next stage will secure automatic spots at the World Cup. Two more teams will earn direct entry to the World Cup from a fourth stage in Asian qualifying and another will go into intercontinental playoffs for a spot in the global tournament.

In front of 65,000 fans at Seoul World Cup Stadium, Lee Kang-in scored in the 61st minute. A cross from Tottenham star Son Heung-min found its way to the Paris Saint-Germain midfielder, who scored on a low shot from near the penalty spot.

"We were able to keep China from creating any dangerous chances," Son said. "There's no perfect match, but we stayed patient and capitalized on our chance to win. We could have won by a bigger margin, but overall, everyone did a great job."

China needed a draw or better to ensure second place in the group but was forced to wait and hope that Singapore could avoid a three-goal loss in Bangkok.

South Korea's Son Heung-min in action with China's Wang Shangyuan. PHOTO: X / @KORFOOTBALLNEWS

China's only appearance at a men's World Cup so far was in 2002, when South Korea and Japan co-hosted the tournament.

At the Rajamangala Stadium, Suphanat Mueanta put Thailand ahead in the first half, and Ikhsan Fandi equalized just before the hour.

- China kept its 2026 World Cup hopes alive by the narrowest of margins despite a 1-0 loss to South Korea on Tuesday in Asian qualifying. China advanced to the third qualification round because Thailand, needing to beat Singapore by three goals, only won 3-1.

Thailand made it 3-1 on goals from Poramet Arjvirai and Jaroensak Wonggorn but couldn't find the key fourth goal.

"I feel disappointed that we didn't make it to the next round," Suphanat said. "I have to apologize to the football fans and all Thai people … there were so many opportunities."

There was also heartbreak for the India squad. India needed to beat Group A leader Qatar to be sure of progressing but lost 2-1 in Doha after scoring the first goal. Kuwait scored in the 81st minute to Afghanistan 1-0 and take second spot with seven points from six games.

Earlier, in a contest between teams already confirmed as first and second in Group I, Australia beat the Palestinian team 5-0 in Perth to make it six wins out of six and a 22-0 goal difference. Socceroos forward Kusini Yengi scored twice, including the contentious penalty in the opening minutes that upset the Palestinian team, and 18-year-old Nestory Irankunda capped it with a late penalty. —*AP*